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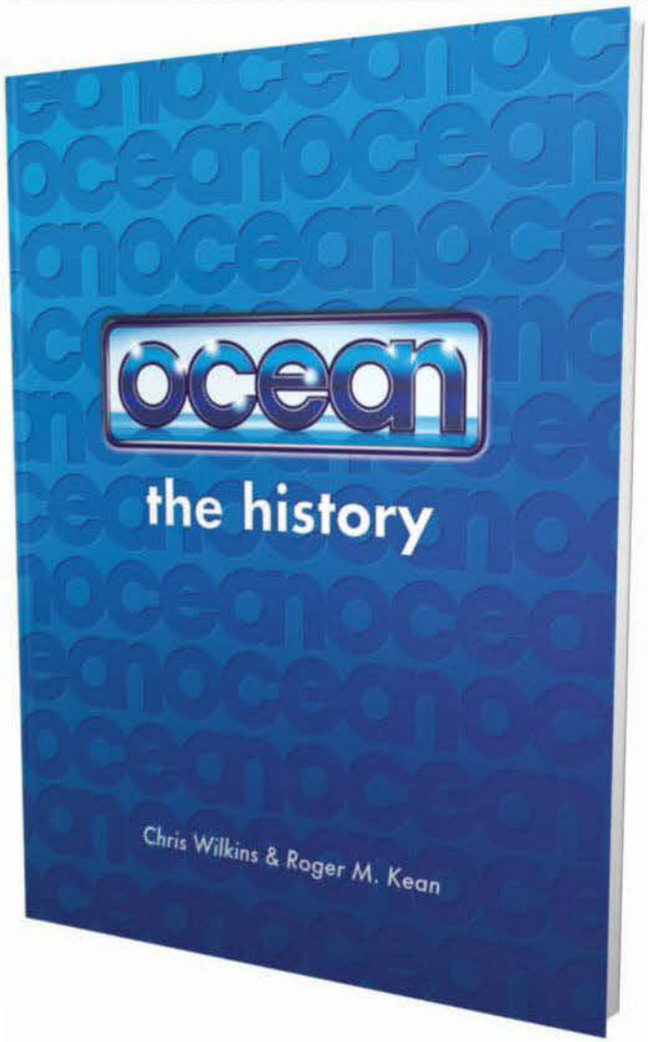
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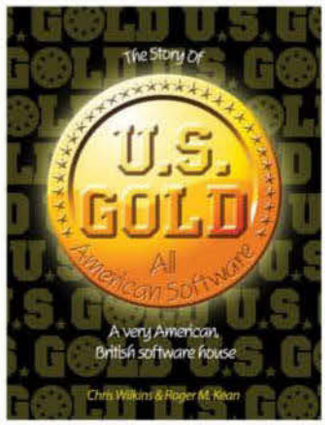


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PREY SLAUGHTERED



YOU KNOW WHAT? I think I might be done with *Bloodborne* for now. Yeah, I'm surprised too. I'll head back and do a new character to get whatever bosses and secrets that I can't do on New Game+ (that shit is *hard*, man) at some point, but a solid week of that game when it came out put me in such a bad place mentally that I just have to move on for the time being. I'll be back. I want that Platinum and unlike the *Souls* games, it doesn't even seem all that difficult. Just not today, yeah?

Right now, my beast-addled brain doesn't want new. My brain wants familiar, hence why chilling out with the *Handsome Collection* version of *Borderlands 2* has been a large part of my *Bloodborne* comedown. I've been revisiting old friends, getting obscenely lucky with loot drops (as usual) and tying up loose ends all over the shop, but it can't last. Eventually, I'll figure out that I've done most of this before. I'm not even sure I'll care when I do, to be honest. But at least by then, I'll have another new vice – it's just a matter of lining something up in advance.

Mortal Kombat isn't a terrible shout – I was pretty good at *Injustice* and enjoyed what I played so far. If nothing else, it's certainly stupid enough to distract me from the fact that *The Witcher 3* isn't out yet, hopefully even for long enough for it to stop being true. This game is going to break me, when I get my hands on the full game. 100 times the size of *Skyrim*? Are you *mad*? I haven't even seen all of *that* yet, nor will I ever at this rate. *Wild Hunt* is looking ludicrously good, though, and the fact that it's so stupidly big makes me wonder... should I go back and get the *Bloodborne* Platinum first, just in case I die in the process of merely trying to explore the world of *The Witcher 3* because it's that huge? Well, maybe just one more Chalice Dungeon...

Enjoy the issue and I'll see ya online...

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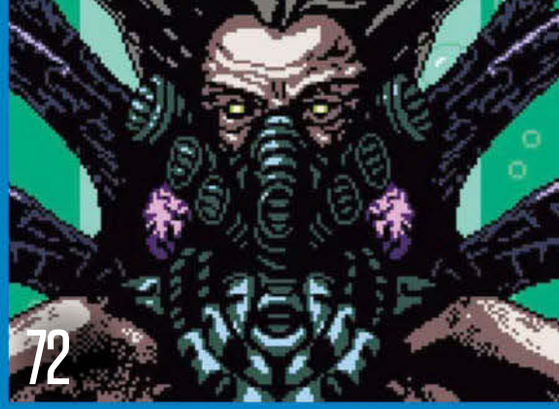
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Chasing down the PS4's humongous RPG

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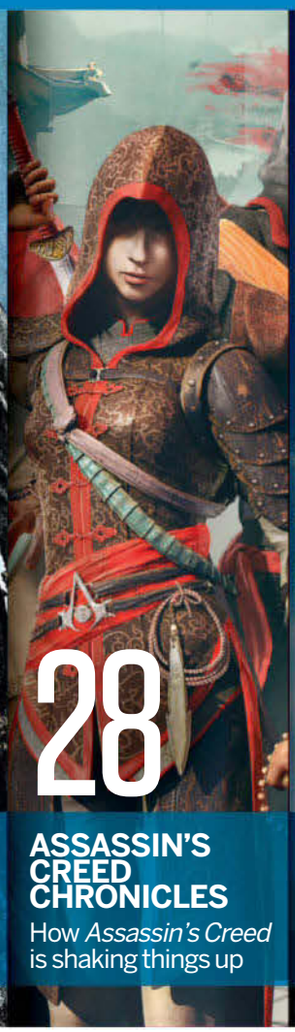
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BATMAN ARKHAM KNIGHT
Everything you need to know



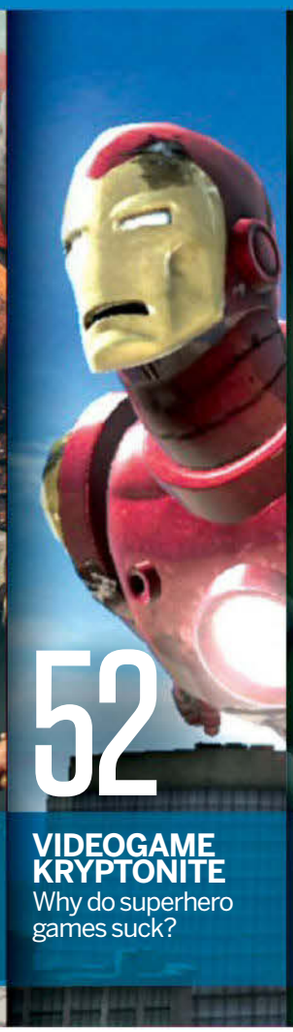
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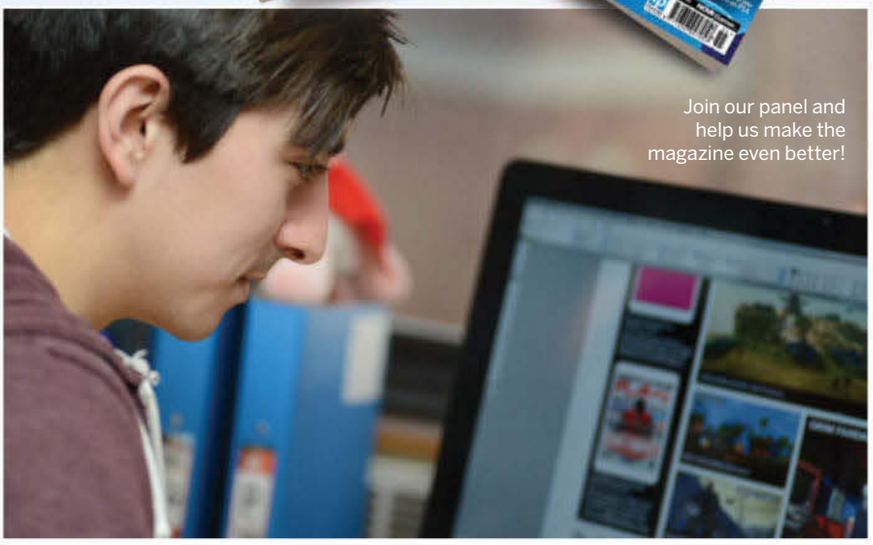


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MONSTER HUNTER

Epic quests, huge beasts and the biggest open world in gaming. Welcome to The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, your new favourite RPG

In the midst of a fiery election season, here comes one Polish immigrant that even Nigel Farage couldn't turn away. After two cult RPGs that married the hardcore sensibilities of European role-playing with the themes and style of *Game Of Thrones*, CD Projekt Red wants to own this genre and kick the likes of BioWare and even Bethesda into the dirt. Are you ready for *Wild Hunt*?

As you probably know by now, after delays, announcements, trailers and Twitter discussions, *The Witcher 3* is a true open world adventure. The previous games in the series allowed Geralt (our titular hero) to investigate sectioned-off areas of a map, but never to move freely between them at will.

Now we know that the promise of a proper open world is very much true, thanks to the rather exciting fact that *The Witcher 3* has gone gold. This is a land as grand as those of *Skyrim* or *Oblivion*, even more so in fact, where distant mountains can be reached and trips between towns are as interesting as the time spent within them.

If you're not familiar with the universe of *The Witcher*, then there's a lot to catch up on. Originally based on a series of popular Polish books, the three games tell the long-winded and complicated story of Geralt, a Witcher, who spends his time hunting monsters for money, and is one of the most skilled warriors in the land. And like all Witchers, he is gifted with unnatural powers.

After two engrossing but fairly confined adventures (albeit with branching narratives), *Wild Hunt* sees CD Projekt Red take a significant gamble with its most precious IP. Telling a tight story with compelling characters is significantly easier when you're able to control the pace and direction of the narrative. This is now a vast open world game, one that's reportedly way bigger than *Skyrim*, and while it has a story to tell, it prides itself on the ability for Geralt to take on whatever challenges he fancies in any order he pleases.

> "CD PROJEKT RED APPEARS TO HAVE GOT EVERYTHING SO VERY, VERY RIGHT HERE"

The world of *The Witcher 3* operates within the same kind of 'realistic' medieval fantasy as *Game Of Thrones*. A land that feel real and historically accurate, but also happens to be full of giant monsters and dragons. Most fantasy games, and indeed fantasy fiction, owe a debt to Tolkien. This is a darker, more complex fantasy, one steeped in its own mythology, while the nods to George R.R. Martin's Westeros are also fairly obvious.

With a work of this ambition, there are always concerns that a team has overreached and pushed itself too far. Thankfully, and somewhat predictably given its track record, CD Projekt Red appears to have got everything very, very right. For starters, this game looks absolutely stunning. Console willy-waving isn't the most dignified of pursuits, but it's great to hear that the PS4 version maintains a 1080p resolution while its Xbox One counterpart only manages 900p. And *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* uses every single pixel, presenting a truly glorious, dense and beautiful world, complete with a sumptuous day/night cycle, a stunning range of environments and some of the most incredible creature



design you can find outside of From Software's catalogue.

Given that the premise of *Wild Hunt* is all about hunting those beasts, the fact they look so amazing should be music to your ears. *The Witcher 2* brought in strong, tricky combat that forced you to manage distance, your surroundings, and even to pre-plan with essential blade oils and potions before battle. The *Witcher 3* expands up on this. Standard scrapping will still require immense concentration and genuine aptitude, as you control groups of enemies with a similarly weighty, precise melee combat to that you'd find in the *Souls* games.

Hack-and-slashers will be punished. While not every encounter will be as tough as *The Witcher 2*'s, purely given the volume of bad guys in the world, you can't expect to mash buttons and get anywhere in this game. Where players will really cut their teeth, though, is on the titular hunts. These games have always prided themselves on heart-pounding encounters with gargantuan beasts, but *The Witcher 3* takes this to another level entirely.

Some of the many NPCs dotted around the townscapes (amazingly, we've not actually seen a single cloned character model, which if true has to be a first in open world games) will offer clues and tactics for taking down one of the many vast creatures terrorising the denizens of the world. If you wade into battle with one of these things holding only your sword and a prayer, you might as well just dive off a cliff headfirst (you can do that too, incidentally).

The hunts require some meticulous pre-planning. An NPC might suggest a certain type of trap to make the early part of the fight smoother. You may hear about a specific potion or concoction you can craft to deal extra damage or resist an elemental effect. Preparation and planning are crucial. But when it really comes down to it, you've got to do the killing yourself, and those sword skills honed in combat with regular enemies will be tested to their limits.

Hunting monsters (as opposed to Monster Hunting, Capcom fans) is a central part of Geralt's character, and it's how he earns money. A new bartering system even lets you push for more cash when dealing with quest-givers.

So The Wild Hunt might just sound like a standard night on the beers for Geralt, but it actually refers to a mysterious and dangerous army that has been wreaking havoc in the Kingdoms Of The North. The Wild Hunt are looking for Ciri, a main character in the books, and you will actually be able to play as her for around 5-10 hours of the game.

Unlike most open world games (Bethesda notwithstanding), side quests in *The Witcher 3* are as important and meaty as the main quest line, and will take up at least 50 hours of gameplay to get through. Fear not, this isn't your typical RPG fetch quest nonsense, and CD Projekt Red hasn't felt the need to absolutely cram the game with truly pointless busy work. Side quests here have proper dialogue, characters and consequences, whether they're long-form monster hunts, assassination

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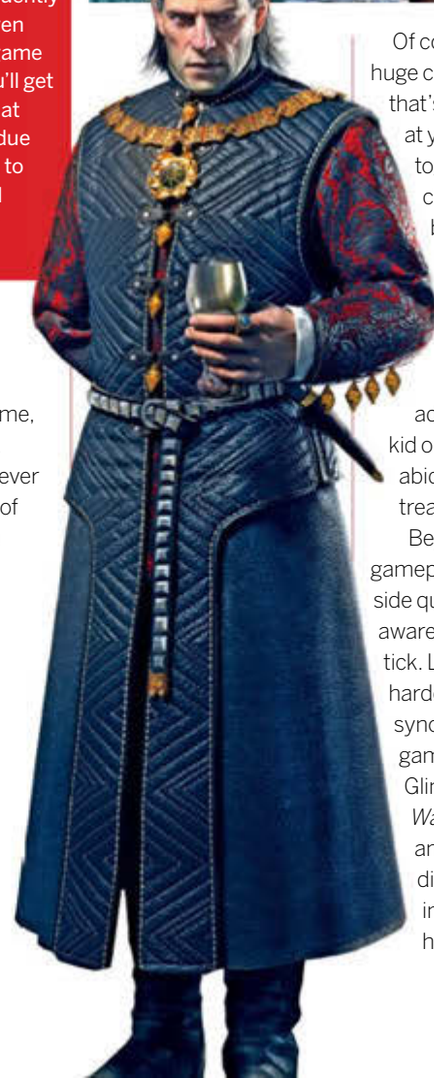
FREE LC



CD Projekt Red isn't like other development studios. Not just because it makes vast, complicated and intellectual videogames, because there are a few teams that do that (hello, From Software). No, CD Projekt Red isn't like other studios because it doesn't have any interest in bleeding its customers dry. Now, in truth, it's more likely greedy publishers than dev teams that came up with season passes, on-disc DLC and microtransactions, but regardless, CDPR doesn't like the sound of any of that nonsense. As with its predecessors, all DLC for *The Witcher 3* will be free. There will be expansions as well, larger batches of content that come less frequently and will be monetised. But given how much will be in the core game (and how much extra stuff you'll get for free), you have to expect that the full expansions – the first due in October with the second to follow in early 2016 – will be positively bursting with things to do.







quests or even murder mysteries.

As if to reinforce the importance of side quests in the game, many will actually change the world permanently. CD Projekt Red has never been afraid to lock off entire pieces of content based on the decisions you made (a whole area of *The Witcher 2* is absent if you make a specific choice), and there will be no cheap way of reloading if you think you've made the 'wrong' choice. The real skill of the developers comes from the fact that most of the time you won't even realise you've made a sizeable choice. The story will flow, the immersion never broken. It's a far better way of conveying a story than the 'Good Versus Evil' we've seen in countless BioWare RPGs.

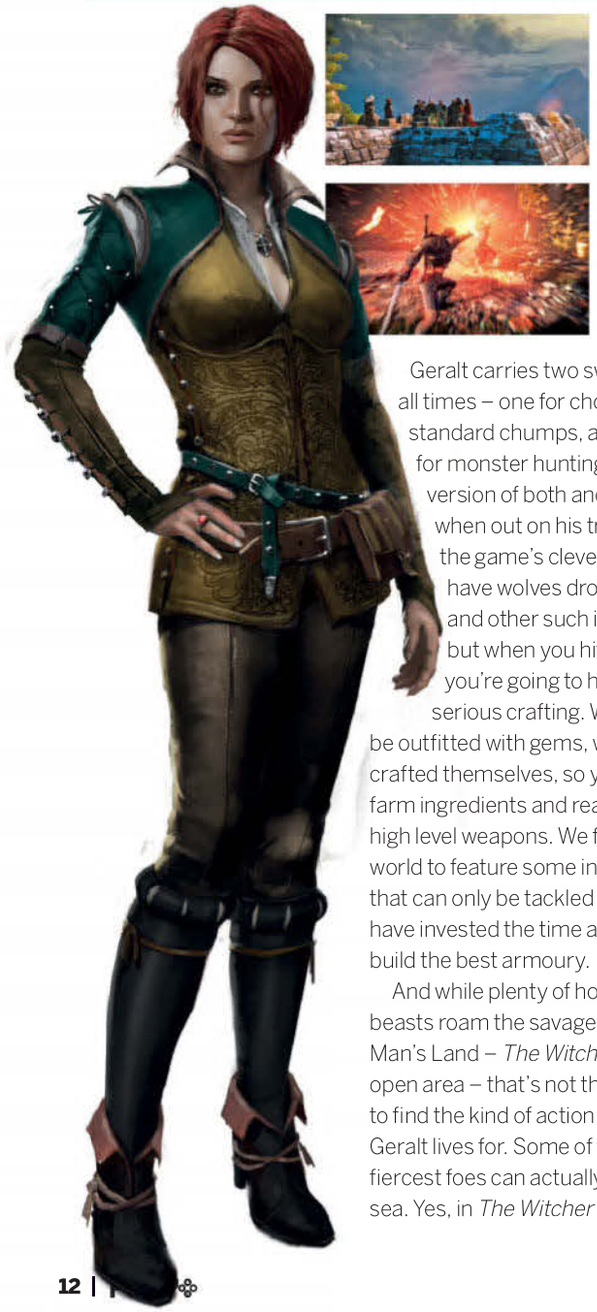
Of course, the main story will feature huge choices, but this isn't a game that's interested in preaching morality at you. Good and evil are mashed together in an ambiguous grey cloud. You're never reprimanded based on your choices – the world continues, life goes on, and you have to live with whatever decision you choose. Life and death isn't, well, a matter of life and death. *The Witcher 3* doesn't admonish you like a naughty school kid or polish your halo like a law-abiding prefect. It's a videogame that treats you like an adult.

Beyond the satisfaction and gameplay journey of battling through side quests, CD Projekt Red is still very aware of what makes many gamers tick. Loot! Once the realm of the hardcore PC crowd, loot has become synonymous with almost every major game these days, from *Destiny* Glimmer farmers to *COD Advanced Warfare* quickscopers. Being an RPG, *The Witcher 3* doesn't disappoint, but as with everything in a game like this, you're going to have to work for the good stuff.

MICHAŁ KRZEMIĐSKI Q&A

Senior art producer, CD Projekt Red

People compare *The Witcher* to *The Elder Scrolls* – do you think these comparisons are relevant? Will the series will appeal to the same audience?
That's a tough question. At their core, both games are RPGs and there is a big number of similarities between them. However, the deeper you go, the more differences you see. Ultimately, I think that *Skyrim* and *The Witcher 3* are entirely different games. *Skyrim* is a sandbox set in an open world. You get a set of game mechanics and you play with them. *The Witcher 3* is all about the story, it's the core of the whole game and around this core, you get a huge, open world with a ton of things to do. In terms of audience, well, I think that it's not the case that if you like *The Witcher*, you can't like *The Elder Scrolls* (or the other way around). You can like both games for what they offer and get a different kind of buzz from playing them.



△○✕□ The sense of scale is astounding throughout, even in everyday scenes.

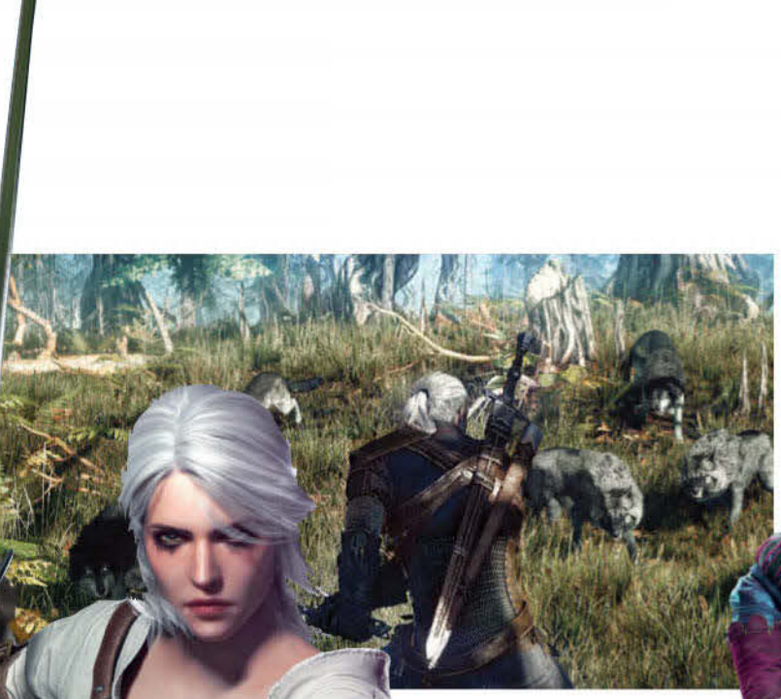




Geralt carries two swords at all times – one for chopping up standard chumps, and a silver blade for monster hunting. He'll find new version of both and plenty more when out on his travels (although the game's clever enough to not have wolves dropping swords and other such inconsistencies), but when you hit the top levels, you're going to have to do some serious crafting. Weapons can be outfitted with gems, which can be crafted themselves, so you'll need to farm ingredients and really earn those high level weapons. We fully expect the world to feature some insane monsters that can only be tackled by those who have invested the time and effort to build the best armoury.

And while plenty of horrendous beasts roam the savage lands in No Man's Land – *The Witcher 3*'s largest open area – that's not the only place to find the kind of action that a guy like Geralt lives for. Some of the game's fiercest foes can actually be found at sea. Yes, in *The Witcher 3*, Geralt can sail, and take to the treacherous high seas to seek out his biggest and baddest prizes. And with a weather system that can turn from sunshine to storm at the drop of a finely tailored hat, you can bet that some of *Wild Hunt*'s most memorable moments will be spent wrestling booms and jibs, as well as trying to fend off terrifying forty-foot sea monsters like a Witchery white-haired Jack Sparrow.

Talking of the weather – not really something you'd perhaps expect to read in a giant feature about a hardcore RPG – *The Witcher 3* might just have the best day/night and weather system in any game outside of *Driveclub*. The lighting model in the *REDEngine* is absolutely incredible, up there with the likes of *Destiny* and *GTA V*, and it creates vistas that look like they've been lifted from an oil painting. Couple that with the inclement weather, and the game just oozes atmosphere. A giant









△○×□ Character models are amazing, which will make those key interpersonal moments even better.



forest is scary enough without shimmering twilight and a light haze of grey drizzle.

The sheer volume of detail in this world is quite unlike any other open world game, barring perhaps Rockstar's finest, and the scale is considerably bigger than anything in *GTA* and even *Red Dead Redemption*. Nothing is procedurally generated – every inch of the environment, every dungeon, literally every single pixel has been hand crafted by CD Projekt Red's world-class artists.

The detail actually informs the world you're moving through, too, it's not just there for show. Towns have individual and unique houses, but as you move out into the suburbs, you'll find farmers and craftsmen in homesteads, creating the necessary produce to keep the town running.

Even cooler is an example the development team have discussed. A Griffon makes its nest on the crest of a hill, and needs wood to do so. As you get closer to his net, you may notice that the trees have been snapped in half, with twigs and branches scattered across the ground, as the Griffon has decimated the forest to build his lair. Does it affect gameplay? Not directly, at least outside of helping to track the beast. But as a tool to pull you into this incredible world? Brilliant stuff, truly.

"PUBS PLAY HOST TO ALL MANNER OF HIJINKS, FROM SCRAPS AND ROMANCES TO A FEW BOOZY GAMES OF GWENT"

Even more impressive, then, is the fact that many of the various town's buildings can be entered and explored, with every interior telling its own little tale. In classic *Witcher* style, though, the most interesting stuff happens when you're a few ales into an evening. Pubs play host to all manner of hijinks and tomfoolery, from scraps and romances to a few boozy games of Gwent (a brand new and original card game) and a drunken stumble home. Pay attention and you may perhaps stumble across a conspiracy being hatched over a few empty tankards, or you may accidentally ingratiate yourself with the right people to help you take down The Wild Hunt.

CD Projekt Red is a developer like no other. The fact it owns PC retail website Good Old Games means that it can support this type of vast and unfiltered project, and the good will it has built up in its relationship with publisher Bandai Namco likely leads to very little publisher intervention. This is a studio that doesn't charge for DLC (kind of) and wants as much value for its customers as humanly possible. Like its Polish compatriot Techland, it's a team that values its customers very highly.

And those customers are going to be very satisfied come late May. Barring some sort of catastrophe, or if the game simply stops working after ten hours, this is going to be one of the essential PS4 games of 2015. An all-engrossing, life-swallowing journey into the heart and mind of one of gaming's truly great characters, and an open world of absurd detail and rare quality. It's time to get excited. It's time to die your hair grey. It's time to get ready for *Wild Hunt*...



INTERVIEW

Miles Tost

Level designer, CD Projekt Red

Can you give us an idea of how big *The Witcher 3*'s world is and how dense it is in terms of the towns, villages and events you will come across as you explore it?
We've had a hard time accurately conveying how large the game world really is. I've come to the conclusion that it's something that you really have to play in order to understand. Sure, I can give you a number – 35 times larger than the previous *Witcher* title in regards to playable area – however, it doesn't really convey a lot of info, especially since it's hard to measure with many caves, interiors, and underwater locations being in the game and accessible as well. There's quite a bit of 'vertical' content. What I can say is that the game will offer enough content for players to spend anywhere between 100 and 150 hours plus, depending on whether you are a completionist or more casual about the game. I feel like we struck a good balance when it comes to content and world size.

How have you have balanced putting places and events in the world so that players have things to do, without taking away the sense that you're traveling in a vast, open wilderness?
There's multiple factors that went into achieving this. It started in the pre-production phase of the project. The world size was ultimately determined by the space required to tell the stories that we wanted to tell. We didn't just create a landmass and decided that now we need to fill it up somehow just to later maybe run into the problem of having too much or too little space. So basically, the content dictated the size of the world. After that, it's a matter of finding out what feels good through lots of playtesting and re-evaluating. When placing points of interest and encounters, we don't just decide that every X minutes/seconds you need to stumble into something. It's a balance act. Sometimes it's good to have nothing really going on except for the nice landscape with its views. Contrast is key. If stuff constantly happens to you in the game, events lose their novelty. You've got to have some moments of calm in order to be able to properly appreciate when things happen.

How open is the choice system and branching storyline of *The Witcher 3*? Is it simply based around dialogue options or can your actions affect things as well?
Consequences can also follow your actions. Those sometimes speak for more than the words you can choose. We also consider inaction something that draws consequences in the game. Imagine yourself in a situation where you have to chase someone down. Do you capture him? Or kill him? Does he maybe escape? All of that can influence what happens afterwards, later in the game. For me, the coolest thing is that consequences are not always foreseeable. You might do one thing early on in the game and it can come back way later to bite you in the ass. It's not like the game tells you what will happen when you do a specific choice. You have to live with the consequences of your choices and actions. This makes the story and its outcome very personal.

> "GERALT'S COMBAT STYLE IS UNIQUE, WITH HIM ALMOST DANCING WITH HIS ENEMIES"

How does the system through which Geralt can bargain for more money for contracts work?
We've been saying that with *Wild Hunt*, we want to bring Geralt back to his roots, his profession. Geralt is a professional monster slayer first and foremost. With that comes the ability to also negotiate a price for your services. Now, it's your choice here how greedy you want to be, but not everyone has a lot of coin at their disposal and sometimes you might find yourself motivated by different reasons other than the money and the prestige that comes with it. You don't *need* to negotiate a price – most people will already have an amount in mind. It is when you, as a professional, are not happy with the money, that you can negotiate a different fee.



How and why have you changed the combat system for *The Witcher 3*?
We've been listening to feedback from fans and decided to rebuild *Wild Hunt*'s combat from the ground up. Our main focus was to increase its responsiveness and really put control into the player's hands. At the same time, our ambitions were to make combat challenging in the way that there's not just 'one solution' to any enemy type. Geralt has a wide arsenal of different tools at his disposal ranging from multiple swords, ranged weapons like crossbows and bombs to combat magic that allows him to set his enemies on fire or even control their mind to turn them against their comrades. Different foes will require him to make use of his entire skill set in various ways. Combat is now more brutal with our dismemberment system in place. It gives Geralt's strikes a lot more weight and fits perfectly within the gritty world that is the *Witcher* universe.

A lot of games seem to be emulating the combat system from the *Batman* games. Have you also taken inspiration from that, or is that trend something you've tried to avoid?
When designing games, of course you look at other games for inspiration. Figure out what worked and what you'd like to improve upon. Having said that, *Wild Hunt*'s combat system has a very unique feel to it, especially in the realm of sword fighters. It has to, in a way. From the source material of the *Witcher* universe, we know that

Geralt's combat style is considered as unique, with him almost 'dancing' with his enemies. His move set (dodging with pirouettes, for example), the way he wields and uses his swords, the combat music tracks with a deep focus on drum rhythms... all of that is made to reflect this notion.

Do the sequences in which you play as Ciri differ in terms of gameplay and pacing to when you're playing as Geralt?

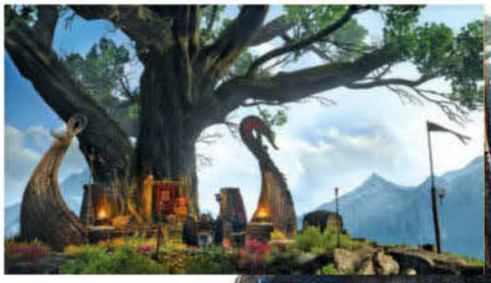
Yes, they do. The game still focuses on Geralt's story and we consider the Ciri sections more of a narrative tool. It helps telling a story from multiple perspectives sometimes. Gameplay-wise, for this reason, we decided to make Ciri's sections more linear compared to playing as Geralt. She's been trained to become a Witcher, yet has never undergone the mutations. She's also not able to use their signature combat magic, the Signs. Because of this, she plays similar to Geralt in one way and very different in others. She's a living weapon, sought after by many different factions in the game for their own goals, due to her powerful magic affinity. This power allows her to more than make up for her shortcomings as a Witcher by using teleportation abilities. These sections allow us to show just how powerful she is and offer a little extra variety in gameplay to players.

How open are *The Witcher 3*'s town and villages to exploration?

There are plenty of accessible interiors in Novigrad City and all the villages in the world. We made sure of that. 'Open world' for us means that the world is open to the player and free to explore. This applies to most of the interiors, which have been lovingly and carefully handcrafted much like the rest of the game. Some of them are unlocked because... it makes more sense and it makes the world a bit more believable. *The Witcher* world is dangerous, of course people that can afford it would try to lock their buildings. At the same time, we want it to be open for the player so rest assured that the majority of interiors still remain accessible with the occasional 'flavor' locked building. Some of these buildings don't stay locked, of course. You might get to know the owner of a place who then welcomes you in his home. In a way, Novigrad opens up more and more as you progress in the game, making new acquaintances.

You've talked in the past about NPCs reacting to Geralt in different ways depending on actions you have performed. Does this have gameplay implications or is it more about atmosphere?

There's both. We have the atmospheric kind where people will react if you cast Signs in their vicinity or barge into them, for example. Sometimes, people will even comment on Geralt's appearance, which as a mutant monster slayer, somewhat differs from how regular humans look (Witchers have cat-like eyes, for example). And then there's some that affect gameplay. Imagine in one quest you made a choice to kill a guy. Later on, you might need someone's help but it turns out they were buddies with the guy you killed so now he won't help you and you need to find another way. Maybe, if you hadn't killed the guy but had treated him nicely instead (even though he might not have deserved it), people would've been more helpful...





Is the whole game open to explore as you want from the beginning?

We definitely open the world up as soon as possible within the Prologue section of the game, [with] a relatively small slice of our open world in which the player can freely and more or less safely roam and explore. This is to get the player accustomed to our open world and its workings. After finishing the Prologue (you can decide to meddle for longer, which we encourage), we throw you straight into the middle of our huge open world from which point on you can basically go wherever you please. There's a couple of mechanisms in place to prevent the player from feeling lost. First off, when in doubt, following the main quest line will always bring you to new and exciting places to visit. On the other hand, each village has their own notice board. Each of these offer a variety of different activities or quests to engage in. Sometimes they also have some hints as to interesting places to visit. This acts as a familiar element that all villages have in common and that the player can always rely on for some interesting stuff to do.



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BATMAN ARKHAM KNIGHT

We emulate the world's greatest detective and hunt down every single detail on the biggest Batman game yet

1 THE BATMOBILE IS HERE

Rocksteady is placing a lot of focus on the introduction of the Batmobile to *Arkham Knight*, singling it out as the thing that's going to make the biggest difference to how the game plays. Indeed, the studio has had to widen the streets of Gotham in order to give you the space you need to bomb around at speed in Batman's iconic vehicle, meaning that the world has been built around it. The intention is that transitioning between driving and gliding will be seamless, making traversing Gotham that much more fluid.

2 HE'S IN A TANK

The Batmobile isn't just about giving us a new way of travel, it is also a weapon. While speed is ordinarily its focus, the Batmobile can transform into a combat mode, utilising a large machine gun and rockets that you can use to take out enemy tanks. So there you have it, the Batmobile doesn't only mean you can jump over ramps with a nifty rocket booster – it means you can engage in tank battles, too.

3 THE ARKHAM KNIGHT'S A MYSTERY

The Arkham Knight has been described as the first new villain to be introduced that is exclusive to the *Arkham* series. For our money, that's probably misdirection and it's going to turn out that the person inside the suit will be someone that is rather familiar to us, rather than a complete unknown. Indeed, the identity of the Arkham Knight has got everyone speculating – there are theories that it could be Hush, Jason Todd, or even Joker. We just can't wait to find out if any of those are true.

4 SCARECROW IS ON TOP

Though we reckon the Arkham Knight will end up taking centre stage, it is Scarecrow who is being positioned as the primary antagonist at the beginning of the game. Scarecrow has warned the city of Gotham that he has planted bombs containing his new fear toxin around the city and plans to detonate them, forcing the evacuation of all its citizens. Scarecrow has also united Batman's foes – including the likes of Penguin, Two-Face and Harley Quinn – using their desire to take down Batman as a rallying cry.

5 FEAR IS YOUR FRIEND

There's a new tool in your arsenal when it comes to taking down the thugs that are left populating Gotham's streets after its forced evacuation: fear takedowns. When enemies are unaware of your presence, you are able to take out enemies using this new technique. Batman will attack his target and the game will go into slow motion, giving you a window to direct your view towards the next victim.

6 THE WORLD IS YOUR WEAPON

Anyone who has played *Sleeping Dogs* will be aware of the array of violent environmental attacks that game lets you to perform. *Arkham Knight* brings those kinds of combat options to the table (though, unfortunately we cannot confirm whether there will be impale-enabling fish in the game). The environmental attacks we've seen so far include Batman knocking a bad guy out using a metal lampshade and electrocuting another on a fuse box.

7 GADGETS AND GLIDING GO TOGETHER

With *Arkham Knight* being five times the size of *Arkham City*, it's fortunate that gliding has been tweaked to enable you to climb higher and soar for longer. Where *Arkham City* introduced the ability to use gadgets in combat, *Arkham Knight* will let you to use some of your gadgets while in the air – the grapnel gun now lets you to change directions instantly while gliding, for example.

8 IT WON'T BE HELD BACK

With *Arkham Knight* only coming to the current generation of consoles, Rocksteady has freed itself up to use the full power of the PS4. That's unquestionably benefiting the game from a visual perspective – we've seen some spectacular sights as Batman soars through the rain, lit by the neon glow of Chinatown. It's not just about visuals, though. Rocksteady says that up to fifty enemies can appear on-screen at once in *Arkham Knight*. Now that's going to be a challenge to deal with.



△○×□ It's got lights in the wheels! That, ladies and gentleman, is the absolute height of technology

△○×□ Remember, Batman doesn't kill people – he just electrocutes them to within an inch of their life. They'll be fine...











△○×□ The Arkham Knight has tanks at his disposal. Lots of tanks. Good thing the Batmobile's packing firepower.

9 YOU'RE THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE

It's important to remember that Batman is supposed to be about brains as well as brawn. Puzzles will return in *Arkham Knight*, with new gadgets such as the Batmobile's winch adding another string to Batman's bow when it comes to tackling obstacles. His intel gathering abilities are also being enhanced – as well as using Detective mode, Batman can now chuck out his new Batarang sensor to gain information on a set area.

10 THIS IS THE END

Rocksteady has been clear about this: the *Arkham* series is a trilogy and *Arkham Knight* will be its concluding entry. That's disappointing in a sense, given how brilliant the *Arkham* games have been, but it also means we can expect an epic conclusion, hopefully with some finality, as Rocksteady seeks to go out with a bang. That also means we've got the exciting prospect of seeing what this studio will do next after moving on from the caped crusader. Bring it on.

11 ORACLE MAKES HER DEBUT

Okay, so Oracle is in the other *Arkham* games, but we never actually get to see her. That's all changing in the new game, with Oracle playing a far more prominent role in the game's story. Rocksteady has suggested that learning more about Oracle and gaining a deeper insight into her character will also help us to see another side of Batman. Oh, and you can visit Oracle in her clock tower – a fine location for a secret base, if you ask us.

12 YOU CAN PLAY AS HARLEY QUINN

We're not really fans of this trend of trying to tempt people to buy games early with shameless pre-order bonuses, but we feel compelled to inform you nonetheless that *Arkham Knight* is doing just that with this character pack. Pre-ordering the game will gain you access to four challenge maps where you are able to play as Harley Quinn, using her unique weapons, gadgets and abilities.

13 THERE'S PS4 EXCLUSIVE CONTENT

Exclusive to the PS4 version of *Arkham Knight* is the Scarecrow Nightmare pack. The DLC seems to serve as a prologue to the events of *Arkham Knight* that will reintroduce Scarecrow. It looks like the pack will play similarly to the Scarecrow sections in the first *Arkham* game, with Batman presumably suffering the effects of Scarecrow's fear toxin as he attempts to overcome one of his most recognisable nemeses.

14 YOU'VE GOT A GUN?!

We won't go into too much detail as we don't want to spoil anything, but information contained in *Arkham Knight*'s ERSB rating suggest that a gun makes an appearance. That's rather odd, considering Batman doesn't kill people. Our guess? There may be a section where you play as a villain and it is there that you use a gun. Alternatively, the scene in question could take place while Batman is hallucinating under the influence of the Scarecrow's fear toxin.

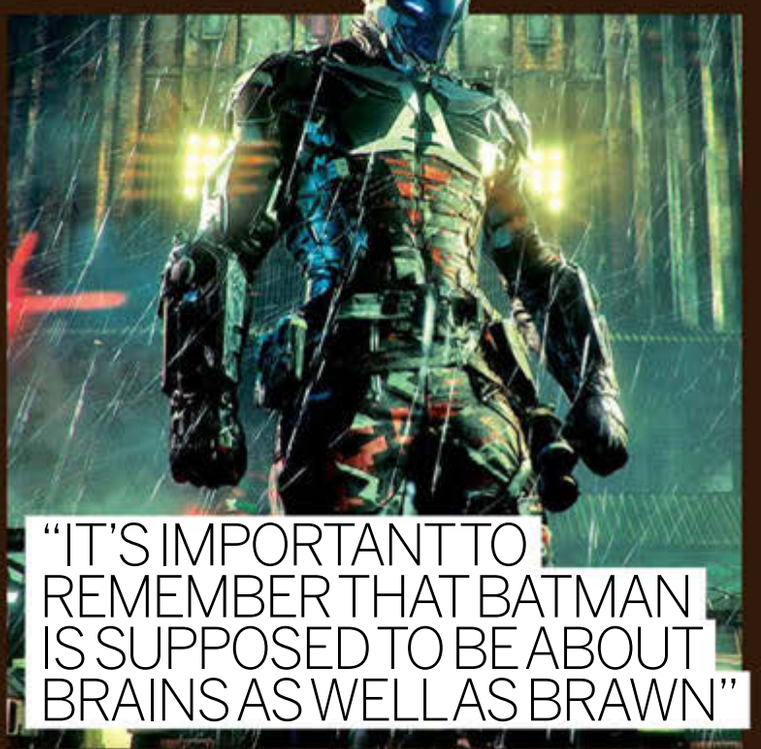
15 COULD BATMAN DIE?

You may want to skip this one if you want to avoid spoilers. The limited edition of *Arkham Knight* comes with a statue that has a rather revealing inscription: "From a grateful city, in memory of the Gotham Knight." The implication is that Batman either dies, or retires at the end of the game. Having said that, it would be pretty damn stupid to give away such a crucial story point like that on a statue in the limited edition of the game.

16 CHALLENGE MAPS ARE BACK

Did you get obsessed with gaining perfect scores in the *Arkham Asylum* and *City* challenge maps? Well, you'll be pleased to hear that they will make a return in *Arkham Knight*. We are assuming that both combat and predator challenge maps will be in the game; whether there will be a new style of challenge maps in *Arkham Knight* is something we will have to wait to find out.





"IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT BATMAN IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT BRAINS AS WELL AS BRAWN"







△○×□ **This nattily-dressed gentleman has fallen victim to an uppercut from the one man with worse fashion sense than him.**



GO SUPERPOWERED

Four games that match up to Arkham

Superhero games had something of a bad rap before Arkham Knight came along and showed everyone how things should be done, but it's far from the only superhero game that has done things right...









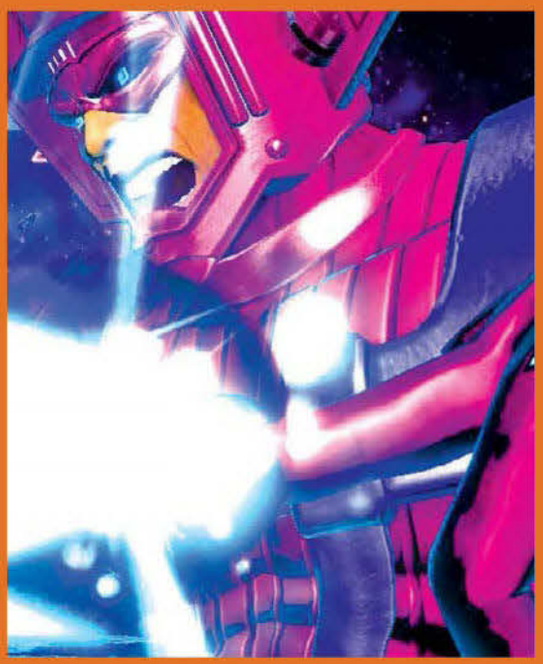
VIEWTIFUL JOE

Side-scrolling beat-'em-up *Viewtiful Joe* is a beautifully colourful, intense and fast-paced experience. If you've still got a PS2, or a backwards-compatible PS3, we would highly recommend giving it a go.



SPIDER-MAN 2

Before *Arkham* game along, the king of superhero adaptations was *Spider-Man 2*, winning plaudits for its web-slinging mechanics and surpassing expectations for what seemed to be little more than a cash-in.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3

This ridiculous, ostentatious and much-loved fighter has a huge roster of superhero characters. As well as our previous entries, Viewtiful Joe and Spider-Man, there's Wolverine, Hulk, Iron Man and a whole bunch more.



SAINTS ROW IV

This game shook up *Saints Row*'s standard formula by giving you a bunch of superpowers to play with, enabling you to run up buildings, shoot fireballs from your hands and leap huge distances. It was all the better for it.







PS4 When we find out who Oracle's DID they are going to pay BIG TIME.

17 THERE'S NO MULTIPLAYER

Arkham Origins brought multiplayer to the series for the first time. However, it seems it may also have been the last, with Rocksteady saying that there will be no multiplayer mode in *Arkham Knight*. To be honest, we're happy to hear that the studio will be focusing its energy on the single-player campaign, because that's the reason we want to play the game. Having said that, we could have got on board with a co-op mode that let us pelt around Gotham as a duo.

18 THERE'S TROUBLE AFOOT

Rocksteady has talked about *Arkham Knight* exploring what happens when the people close to Batman come under threat in his battles with villains. To us, that means that there are two of Batman's allies most likely to get caught in the crossfire: Commissioner Gordon and Oracle. Does this mean that one of them is going to get come to serious harm? We'll have to wait and see, but Rocksteady is certainly hinting that *someone* is going to get hurt.

PS4 The Batcave does not appear in this game, with Batman using Oracle's hideout as a base of operations instead.

19 RIDDLER IS BACK

Riddler returns in *Arkham Knight* and that means plenty more Riddler challenges for us to beat. However, he's also got something new up his sleeve. Riddler has been building a series of tracks designed to test Batman's skill in the Batmobile. As you do laps around a track, it will become more difficult, dropping out a section of floor, for example. We're not sure if racetracks fit with the Riddler's MO, but they should be a fun way of challenging our skills.

THE INFLUENCE OF ARKHAM

The Arkham series; critical acclaim mean it's had its ideas emulated or outright pinched countless times, from its excellent combat system, to detective vision









△○×□ You can glide far higher and further in *Arkham Knight*, leading to sights like this.





"ROCKSTEADY IS CERTAINLY HINTING THAT SOMEONE IS GOING TO GET HURT"



20 KEVIN CONROY IS THE BAT

The voice of Batman will be familiar to anyone who has played the *Arkham* games (or even watched the animated series), with Kevin Conroy returning to voice Batman. There are a number of other returning cast members too, with Troy Baker back to voice Two-Face, Nolan North cast as The Penguin and Tara Strong reprising her role as Harley Quinn. Mark Hamill will not return, however.

21 POISON IVY IS HELPING YOU

It appears that Poison Ivy has decided to help Batman. Poison Ivy tells Batman about a meeting between the supervillains in which they agreed to unite to take him down under the Scarecrow's leadership. Why is she helping Batman? Either her intention is to lead him into a trap, or there's something that she wants from him in exchange.

△○×□ Has Hideo Kojima been pushed out of Konami because they found out he is the Arkham Knight? Probably...

22 THINGS HAVE CHANGED

There are a hints that Batman and his allies are not on good terms with the public. Though it's not something Rocksteady addressed. It seems there is speculation about what happened between the Batman and the Joker, bringing his vigilante status into focus. As for Jim Gordon, there is an election going on for the Commissioner. Maybe people have their doubts about Gordon, too?

23 GOTHAM WILL BURN

Firefly appeared in *Arkham Origins*, but he's yet to appear in any of the Rocksteady *Arkham* games. That will change in *Arkham Knight*, with his appearance confirmed. As to other villains that could turn up *Arkham Knight*, we are moving into the realms of speculation. Hush is one that could well appear, as well as Anarky.

24 YOU RETURN TO ASYLUM?

There's been speculation that a bridge spotted in the background of one of *Arkham Knight*'s trailers leads to the island on which Arkham Asylum is situated. Speculation is all that it is at the moment, but the prospect of returning to the site of the first game is undeniably appealing. We can well imagine a climatic return to where it all began, a la Shadow Moses at the end of *Metal Gear Solid 4*.

25 IT'S BEEN DELAYED AGAIN

Originally scheduled to release in October 2014, *Arkham Knight* become one of the many games that ended up being delayed into 2015. Rocksteady has now delayed the game *again*, pushing it back to 23 June. We're always for a delay if it means we end up with a better game, but maybe developers should be a bit careful when announcing release dates.

BLOODBORNE
SURVIVING THE HUNT

Yharnam is a horrible place, and you're going to need all the help you can get to survive out there. This first spread explains the basics, but we recommend you save the rest of the feature for later plays unless you're struggling – SPOILERS ARE EVERYWHERE

GETTING STARTED

Some useful tips for new players





PICKING AN ORIGIN

Origins are basically *Bloodborne*'s version of classes and just as in the *Souls* games, they really don't matter all that much after the first hour or two as you can customise and upgrade your Hunter however you like. Given the melee focus of the early stages, the two best choices are Professional and Military Veteran, depending on which weapon you plan to use – those who plan on rocking the Cane should go Professional as it offers the best Skill stat, while Axe or Saw players would do better with the Military origin for its Strength value. Milquetoast offers an even spread of points making it a good all-rounder, plus Lone Survivor and Troubled Childhood are okay if you can deal with the lower damage output – you'll be putting plenty of points into Vitality and Endurance anyway, so nothing is really wasted. Noble Scion is purely for Skill builds that want better gun damage, but this isn't relevant until later in the game by which point you've already have exceeded these stats. Cruel Fate is interesting as although Arcane isn't especially useful early on, the improved drop rate (and rarer items) means you'll have a steadier supply of stuff. Finally, Waste Of Skin is the 'challenge' origin, offering the lowest stats but at the same time the least wasted skill points.

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THE STATS

The numbers, Mason... what do they mean?

Basic attributes work in a very similar way to *Dark Souls*, but the good news is that there are fewer to worry about. In order to increase these, you'll need at least one point of Insight (you'll get one when you see your first boss), which will bring the Doll in Hunter's Dream to life. Here, Blood Echoes can be traded for stat boosts and this is how you level up. But which stats should you be focusing on, and what do they all actually do? Here's a handy breakdown for you.





VITALITY

Upgrading this adds a decent chunk to your HP, which is always useful. The amount of HP gained drops off once at 30 and again at 50, so consider putting points elsewhere when you hit these soft caps in order to better balance your character and not waste your Blood Echoes.

STRENGTH

Heavy melee weapons tend to require high Strength stats to wield, and also tend to offer better stat scaling with Strength as well. Points here boost Physical Attack with these weapons and again, there are two milestones where gains drop off – once at around 25 and again at around 50.

BLOODTINGE

Affects your damage output with firearms. Drop-off points are the same as the other two damage stats (again, 25 and 50) but most builds don't really benefit from boosting it. Unless you're using one of the few Quicksilver-based weapons that can deal decent damage, don't bother.

ENDURANCE

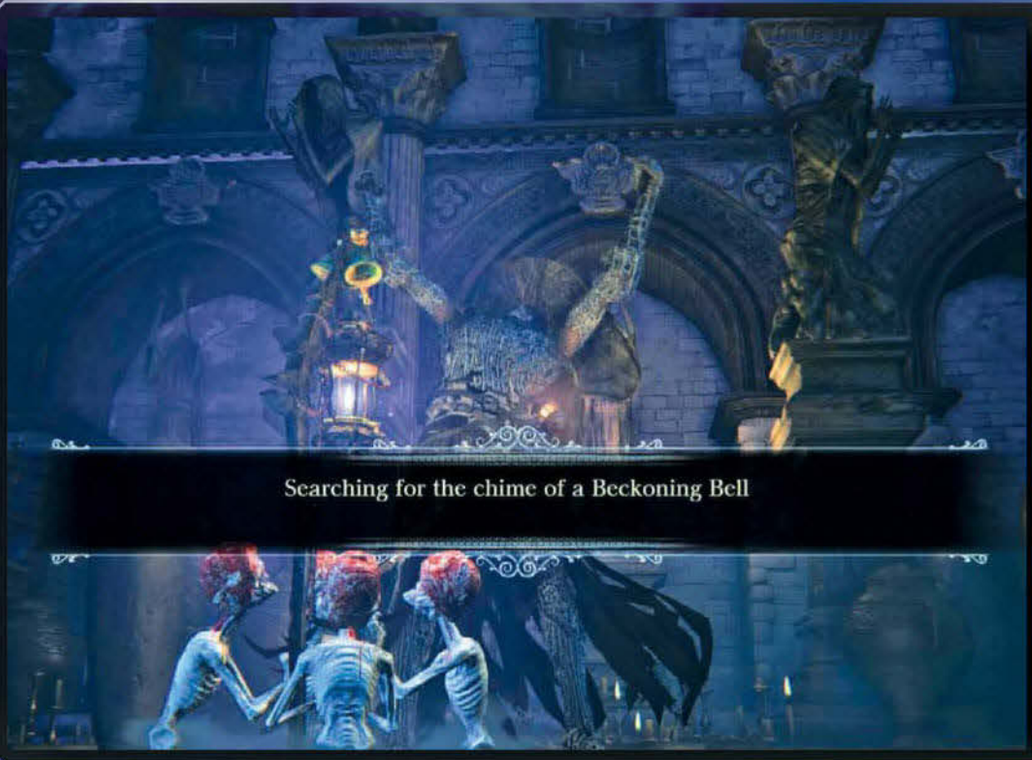
Governs Stamina and resistances. Like HP, Stamina is essential across all character builds, allowing you to extend combos or still have a little bit left for emergency rolls when enemies try to hit back. Stamina gains stop at 40, though you can still add points to boost resistances.

SKILL

The same as Strength, only for quicker and more complex weapons. If you plan on using gear like the Threaded Cane or Blades Of Mercy (which scale well with Skill), this will be your primary stat. The soft caps are the same as for Strength too, so expect diminishing returns after 25 and 50.

ARCANE

Allows the use of crazier Hunter's Tools, improves Discovery (meaning you'll see better item drops) and ups damage with weapons that have Arcane scaling. You can use the basic Tools at 15, but hold off on spending more unless you're using a melee weapon that benefits from it.



SO WHAT IS INSIGHT?

Like so much of *Bloodborne*, Insight is a stat shrouded in mystery. On a basic level, you need one point to wake the Doll and allow leveling, while getting to ten points in total will make Messengers appear in a birdbath outside the Hunter's Dream workshop, from whom you an buy gear using Insight as a currency. Ringing the Beckoning Bell in order to search for co-op partners also consumes one point of Insight. Insight is earned by encountering bosses and defeating them, plus you can add to your stock by consuming Madman's Knowledge items. Be careful, however, as Insight makes the game harder the more you have. Once you go over 15, you will start to see enemies with buffed weapons or new attacks, while going over 40 will open your eyes to a whole world of unpleasant things. You should probably try it at least once but for regular play, particularly in New Game+, you're better off keeping Insight at 14 or less.

THE BOSSES

A blow-by-blow guide to all the big bads

CLERIC BEAST

From Central Yharnam (Optional)



Lock onto the head and shoot repeatedly to stun and enable a powerful Visceral Attack.

Cleric Beast is weak to fire attacks, so use that to your advantage.

Red aura is not to be feared – it's a limb heal and chance for you to pile on damage.

Drops Sword Hunter Badge (unlocks Kirkhammer and Repeating Pistol) when killed.

FATHER GASCOIGNE

From Central Yharnam



Riposte effective in early stages of fight – shoot to counter melee attacks then use Visceral Attack.

Use gravestones in the lower area to make space to charge attacks.

Can trap him on the stairs by leading him up then running back down and to the side.

Music Box (found at window new Sewer/Central Yharnam) can stun him up to three times.

THE WITCH OF HEMWICK

From Hemwick Charnel Lane (Optional)



Red lamp often shows Witch's location, even when she disappears.

Focus attention on the Witch – run around looking for her to avoid spawned enemies.

Damage to clones still counts when second Witch appears at end of fight.

Area behind boss gives workshop tool that allows use of Caryll Runes.

BLOOD-STARVED BEAST

From Old Yharnam (Optional)



Riposte effective in all stages of fight – shoot whenever it raises its right claw to attack.

Bring Antidotes to clear Slow Poison effect. More can be found behind the altar at the back.

It's incredibly weak to fire and the Flamesprayer can be very effective.

Guards Pthumeru Chalice, used for creating and exploring Chalice Dungeons.

VICAR AMELIA

From Cathedral Ward



Can be reached without the Chief Emblem, by dropping down through Cathedral Ward door.

Heal can be prevented using Numbing Mists, or cancelled with a flurry of attacks.

Use longer weapons to target head and hands where possible.

Interact with altar after fight to learn password for Forbidden Woods door.

SHADOW OF YHARNAM

From Forbidden Woods



Use large grave to split up the group and fight one-on-one where possible.

Second and third phases triggered by overall HP across all three, so deal with one at a time.

Katana wielder can be easily parried with well-timed shots.

Be careful later on, as their increased range can clip through objects and hit you.

DARKBEAST PAARL

From Hypogean Gaol (Optional)



Avoid using the lock-on function, since the camera struggles to deal with his incredibly fast movement speed.

Each leg can be broken to stagger, with individual invisible HP gauges for each allowing multiple stuns in quick succession.

Attack its head for a longer stun and to dissipate its electric charge, thus reducing a large portion of its threat.

Drops the Spark Hunter Badge (which unlocks Tonitrus weapon and Bolt Paper at the shop) upon its death.

ROM, THE VACUOUS SPIDER

From Byrgenwerth



Gear yourself with high Arcane resistance, as its most dangerous attacks are magical.

Clear spider minions as quickly as possible. Avoid locking onto them as frontal attacks are ineffective.

When the crowd is dead, attack Rom's abdomen in short combos to save Stamina, then unleash hell when it tries to teleport.

Stick at mid range during second stage to easily react to both magic attacks, but look out for melee hits in the third.

MARTYR LOGARIUS

from Forsaken Castle Cainhurst (Optional)



Use environment to block and avoid magic attacks while closing distance.

Melee attacks can be riposted fairly easily, and baited by staying close.

His charge buff can be interrupted with your own charge attack and backstab.

When he prepares a flurry of swords, target and destroy the one in the ground to interrupt it.

THE ONE REBORN

From Yahar'gul Chapel



Use side passages to reach upper levels and take out mages first.

Stay toward rear end to avoid AOE attacks – move to front on knockdown to target protruding corpse.

Get to higher ground to avoid its vomit AOE attack, then use plunging attack for solid damage and to return to the fight.

CELESTIAL EMISSARY

From Upper Cathedral Ward (Optional)



Use circular/AOE attacks to identify which of the mob is the actual boss. Boss will not chase player, whereas others will.

The boss will grow at around half life, at which point it will follow you. Lead to upper area to help avoid spawns.

Gains magic at around quarter health – sprint around boss to dodge lasers.

EBRIETAS, DAUGHTER OF THE COSMOS

From Upper Cathedral Ward (Optional)



Cannon (powered up with Bone Marrow Ash) to the face an effective way of opening Visceral Attack opportunities.

It's weak to Bolt damage, making Bolt Paper and Tonitrus both good options. Attack from behind where possible.

Try to get to just over half health before starting a big combo, as boss goes apeshit when under half life.

MICOLASH, HOST OF THE NIGHTMARE

From Mergo's Loft: Middle



This is less boss battle and more chase. Kill additional enemies that spawn as you pursue Micolash.

The first actual encounter is incredibly easy, but watch out for AOE spells in the second encounter. It's very dangerous.

Stick close and end combos with either gunfire or Beast Roar to try and prevent/cancel AOE casting.

GEHRMAN, THE FIRST HUNTER

From Hunter's Dream (Optional)



Well-timed shots can easily present Visceral Attack openings, particularly against his more obvious attacks.

His AOE cast later on in the fight is obvious but it has crazy range – run away as soon as he starts charging it.

Dodge forward through his scythe swings and gunshots to get a few free hits, but don't get too greedy.

AMYGDALA

From Nightmare Frontier (Optional)



Head and front arms most vulnerable, but rear is safer – melee attacks easier to read and avoid than ranged in this fight.

Limbs can be weakened by dealing enough damage, while hitting head enough can set up Visceral Attack.

Try to stay close so as to avoid magic attacks, as these can easily kill you in one or two hits.

MERGO'S WET NURSE

From Nightmare Of Mensis



Try to stay around the back to avoid flailing blades, but watch for the spin attack – it hits hard but is well telegraphed.

At regular intervals, boss will summon fog and clones. Simply run in large circles to avoid both attackers until effect wears off.

Clones die in one hit – with a quick weapon, you can see them off as they appear if you'd rather.

MOON PRESENCE

From Hunter's Dream



Stay at full health. Its AOE attack will leave you with 1HP from full health but it will kill you outright if you are damaged.

Sit at mid-range to bait a combo attack – dodge the third hit round the back and you can land a few attacks then retreat and repeat.

Orbs prevent healing, so avoid them as it can easily kill you in one shot when below max health.

THE THREE ENDINGS

How to see them all...



1 YHARNAM SUNRISE

Accept Gehrman's offer in the Hunter's Dream after defeating Mergo's Wet Nurse for the "Yharnam Sunrise" Trophy. Note that this is the only ending that will not let you purchase the Burial Blade trick weapon in NG+.

2 HONORING WISHES

Refuse Gehrman's offer in the Hunter's Dream after defeating Mergo's Wet Nurse for the "Honoring Wishes" Trophy and the regular ending, after you manage to defeat Gehrman, The First Hunter.

3 CHILDHOOD'S BEGINNING

Find and consume three Third Umbilical Cords (Abandoned Workshop, Iosefka's Clinic, Wet Nurse). Then, follow the same instructions for the second ending and an extra boss, Moon Presence, will attack after you beat Gehrman.

SECRETS

A few choice things that you might have missed



You can reach the clinic from the very start of the game from Forbidden Woods. Near the dog cages in the village is a tunnel – follow it to a swamp, then climb the ladder in the middle to get back Central Yharnam. The Cainhurst Summons item is found here, as is Iosefka. Do not kill her here before defeating Rom or you could lock yourself out of the 'true' ending.

After obtaining the Summons, travel to the Witch's Abode lamp and then follow the path back out. When you reach the crossing at the bottom of the hill, a carriage should roll up to take you to an entirely new area, Forsaken Castle Cainhurst. The enemies outside it are tough as hell, but the ones inside are much more manageable, so just run on in.

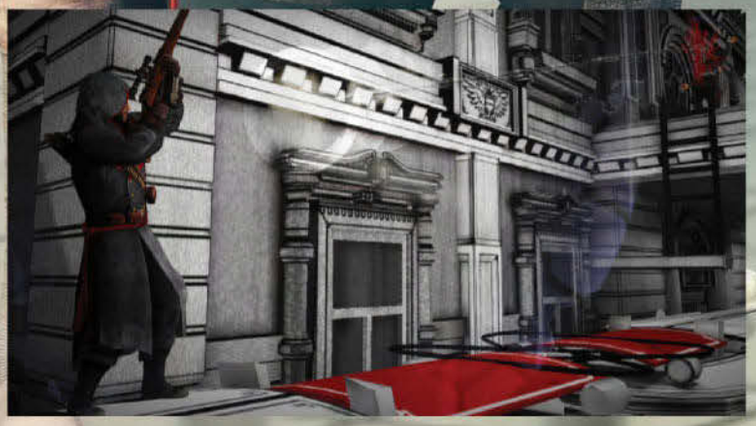


Both Gyura (the gunner in Old Yharnam) and Adella (the nun in Hypogean Gaol basement) respond to Black Church attire. Equip the set before approaching them (you'll need to reach Gyura from the lower lamp without killing beasts or being spotted) and you'll get new dialogue and gestures – sending Adella to Oedon Chapel lets you use her blood for healing.

Use the Make Contact gesture (found in Upper Cathedral Ward) on the large brain in the Nightmare for 30 seconds to earn the strongest Moon Caryll Rune, which increases Blood Echoes earned by 30 per cent. We know it's tempting to kill something so downright vile – particularly in a game like this, where everything seems to want you dead – but kindness pays off.







ASSASSIN'S CREED AN EPISODIC EPIPHANY

Is Ubisoft's new approach to the series with Chronicles the perfect way to avoid repeating the mistakes of Unity and Rogue?



Let's not beat about the bush here – *Unity* was a damn mess at launch. I played enough of it to know that I wasn't going to bang my head against game-breaking bugs for meagre payout in terms of satisfaction but luckily, the setting and subject matter (it's basically a Hollywood retelling of my ancestors' actual lives) interested me enough that it merely got shelved, waiting for the inevitable patches to make it enjoyable *in the right way.* Trouble is, the market's picked up again while *Unity* has been undergoing treatment and with so many great new games to play – that worked from launch, it's worth adding – I can't see *Unity* getting a look-in this side of the summer drought.



The lesson? Don't release your games broken. It's one that's been learned the hard way by a few franchises already this generation, and an issue we doubt we've seen the last of. The problem lies in the fact that game development is a multi-million-dollar business. At the end of the day, a lot of the firms doing well are putting business first and creatives second – budget sheets need to tally up, targets need to be agreed and hit and, as more and more devs are finding, that's putting pressure on teams to either get to market on time in whatever state it ends up in or to bite the bullet, put artistry first and face the massive costs a delay can bring. It's a no-win situation as it stands, with the former jeopardising the futures of even some industry heavyweights and the latter putting inevitable financial strains of top teams and possibly even leading to more saddening high-profile studio closures.



Hoods off to Ubisoft, then, for its novel way of addressing this issue, as the *Chronicles* trilogy seems perfectly placed to do just that. Allow me to explain. Having played the first two parts (*China* and *India*), the main thing I took away was just how well the team at Climax has managed to mimic the *Assassin's Creed* experience – parkour, stealth, strategy and skill all played crucial roles, perhaps more so in this shrunken format than in the somewhat bloated mainline games. So what if Ubisoft no longer *needs* to rush out its 3D *AC* titles? What if regular releases of games like *Chronicles* can fill any down time while the full games get the love they deserve... or at very least, the minimum amount of love required to make a *functional* product.

> "THE CHRONICLES FORMAT IS A PROGRESSIVE WAY TO KEEP FANS HAPPY AND BRAND AWARENESS HIGH"

I've not played a huge amount of *Chronicles*, then, but it's still enough to know that Climax's games feel tight and dense, packed with tense situations and different ways to approach or avoid based on time period and character. And it isn't just gameplay – even art styles change between games in *Chronicles*, something that is near impossible to do on a big annual franchise but which this downloadable game excels at. The Chinese watercolour presentation of the stealth debut, the crisp lines and patterned flourishes of the Prince Of Persia-esque Indian platforming stages, the stark monochrome (save for the odd bold splash of vibrant colour) story of a WWI Russian sniper... these are the kinds of stories we want to hear, games we want to play. And with a simplified approach, they're stories we can enjoy far more frequently than the all-hands-on-deck



triple-A blockbusters that don't even know what half of the bollocks on their press releases even *means* most of the time.

The issue is one of boosting longevity and, moreover, of perceived value. Narrative-led games like *Assassin's Creed* can only go so far with DLC to extend the lifespan of a product, whereas something like *COD* could probably get away with releasing one game per generation and financing it long-term with map packs, numerous expansions and cosmetic packs for the hardcore. Pick up a *Destiny* or *Borderlands* DLC pack and you'll run raid bosses over and over in search of loot – pick up *Freedom Cry* for *Black Flag* and you're looking at the same kind of total play time that a *Battlefield* devotee will invest in one sitting alone when a new map pack drops. The *Chronicles* format is a progressive way to keep fans happy and brand awareness high, and to make the wait for polished mainline sequels that much more easier. It's also a perfect litmus test for new characters and settings – if ten times as many people buy the Russia episode, for instance, we'd see a core series game adopt that as a setting.

I hope *Chronicles* turns out as good as what I've played suggests. We need a new approach of some kind if big IPs are to stay relevant while their dev cycles drag on, and I think this could turn out to be a risky but rewarding play. At very least, I'm glad to see a franchise so entrenched in the tried and true as *Assassin's Creed* become the figurehead for a new business model. So whether it works or not, it may at send a sign to developers and publishers – the old model doesn't work anymore, and y'all should probably take note.

INDIEVELOPMENT

Our indie expert Paul Walker-Emig delves into the exciting, strange and intriguing world of indie development to pick out the best of what's coming to PlayStation





THERE'S MUCH THAT excites us about the prospect of getting our hands on **THE LAST NIGHT** when it comes to PS4. To start with, there's the fact that it looks stunning; its beautiful pixel art is used to render a dark cyberpunk world lit by neon lights that adorn an intimidating architecture ripped from the mind of William Gibson or Philip K. Dick. The setting and style capture our imagination, then, but there's more that draws us to the game. Influenced by the likes of *Another World* and *Flashback*, developer Odd Tales describes it as a cinematic platformer that blends action and infiltration gameplay. While moving between the city's districts, using taxis, ferries or monorails, you'll come across an array of characters that you can interact with, a branching dialogue system giving you control over how things will progress. You'll also be given a choice as to how to deal with in-game events. After finding yourself in a difficult situation, you could try and argue with whoever is confronting you to buy more time, pull your gun on them, or run away. On a conceptual level, there's nothing we don't like about this title. Now it's just a question of whether or not the team behind it can pull it off.

△○×□ **You could argue that these kinds of *Blade Runner* influenced worlds have been overdone, but there's no denying this is still a place we want to explore.**

△○×□ **The idea of taking a fast, freewheeling trip through these odd environments is appealing, but we want to know more about the game's story.**



Another game that's caught our attention is the bizarre-looking **YIIK: A POST-MODERN RPG**. Set in the Nineties, *YIIK* is a game about a college graduate called Alex Eggleston who returns home to be confronted by a place that's a bit more surreal than when he left it. You'll visit Dalíesque landscapes that seem to exist on some otherworldly plane of reality, though for what purpose, we're not yet sure. When it comes to what you actually do in the game, *YIIK* looks to be influenced by JRPGs, in that you'll find yourself embroiled in turn-based battles with a party that can be comprised of up to eight characters. We'll be honest, we are a little concerned that the game will drown in self-satisfaction as it wallows in the mud of internet hipster humour. Though that is a bit of a worry, let's not judge the game too harshly this early. As we edge closer to its release on PS4 and Vita at the end of the year, we should get a better idea of what to expect from this interesting and imaginative title.

It's far clearer what we're going to be getting from **PONCHO**, a 2D platformer that's quite obviously taking a leaf out of *Fez*'s book. Just as *Fez*'s title refers to a fez that allows you to shift your perspective through four dimensions, *Poncho*'s title refers to a poncho that allows you to perform a similar feat.



DEV DIARY

Developer Michael Frauenhofer on bringing *One Way Trip* to PS4

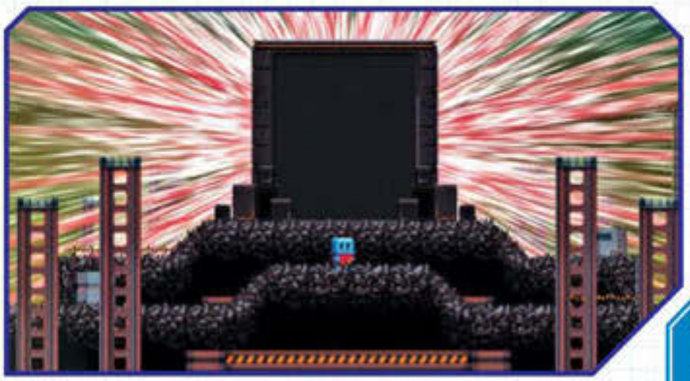
Last month has been a great relief for us. It is surprisingly hard to tell how good a game will 'feel' when you are only half way through the development process. Though our battles are turn-based, and we've been playing the paper prototype for months now, we had to have faith in that the rhythm elements would add the impact we hoped it would once we implemented it. Now that they are all running smoothly, it's really amazing to see how much better things flow when everything syncs up to the beat of a song! There's still lots of things for us to do, but it finally feels like the main problems have been solved and we are just adding some finishing flourishes.

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Rather than being built on shifting your perspective in a 3D space, however, the mechanic around which *Poncho* is built is one that allows you to move the titular character forwards and backwards onto different layers of the 2D environment. The game is built around exploration, tasking you with finding your own way around a world that the game's developers say you'll have to revisit multiple times in order to see everything. Given the similarities with *Fez*, *Poncho* may struggle to step out of its shadows, but we hope it can do so when the game comes to PS4 and Vita.

One game that's unlikely to have any such problems is **AZTEZ**, because it's quite unlike anything else we can think of. On the one hand, it is a turn-based strategy game – a simplified *Civilization*, if you will. However, that's complemented with a real-time beat-'em-up component. Its 2D combat looks relatively technical, reminding us of *Guacamelee*, with launchers, air dashes and all manner of spectacular special moves part of your arsenal. This Aztec empire-set blend of genres also has a strong sense of style. It uses a cartoony design that's lent a violent edge due to the fact that it is the red of the blood that you draw from your enemies that is the only colour to punctuate its otherwise monochrome visual style. The combat element of *Aztez* looks to be deep enough to support a game on its own. That it's got a turn-based element on top of that only makes it more interesting. We're pleased to hear *Aztez* is coming to Vita, because it looks like an ideal fit for the system.





△○×□ *Poncho* is kind of looking like a *Fez* rip-off. Let's hope that there is a little more to it than that...

"WE'RE A LITTLE CONCERNED THAT YIIK WILL DROWN IN SELF SATISFACTION"

△○×□ We can see *Aztez* having some kind of progression system through which you can learn new, brutal moves to take into combat.







FUNDED

ORPHAN

PLATFORMS: PS4
ETA: 2016



It looked like *Orphan* wouldn't get funded, let alone meet its PS4 stretch goal. Thankfully, a push towards the end of its campaign saw the game make it over the line. *Orphan* looks a lot like *Limbo*, though it seems to be more diverse from a gameplay perspective, encompassing, platforming, stealth and combat as part of its tale about a boy dealing with the aftermath of an alien invasion.

WISHLIST

RONIN



Given Devolver Digital's history of bringing its games to PlayStation, there's reason to be hopeful that the incredible looking *Ronin* will get announced for PS4. In *Ronin*, you use turn-based and action mechanics, controlling a badass ninja on a mission to kill five powerful corporate figures. The game reminds of the likes of *Mark Of The Ninja* and *Gunpoint*. Given how excellent those games are, we really hope *Ronin* sneaks onto PlayStation after it has made its PC debut.

IF YOU LOVE...

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER



If you, like us, are still lamenting the disappearance of the skating genre from gaming, then you should be playing Roll7's brilliant *OlliOlli 2*.

COMPANY LINE

"I want to reassure fans that I am 100% involved and will continue working on *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*." Yes, Kojima, but are you leaving?

ETA 1 SEPTEMBER 2015 | **PUB** KONAMI | **DEV** KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS (SORT OF...) | **TWITTER** @METALGEAR_EN

Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain

As Big Boss arrives, the boss leaves

PS4

ALSO COMING TO PS3

YOU'VE SURELY HEARD the news by now? *Metal Gear* creator and director of *MGS V: The Phantom Pain*, Hideo Kojima, is no longer at Konami. Well, he sort of is, but not really. Additionally, the studio that Kojima heads up, Kojima Productions, is being shuttered. Well, Konami hasn't *actually* said that, but it hasn't said that it's *not* being closed either. In fact, Konami hasn't said much at all to clarify all the rumours swirling around Kojima, his studio, and Konami itself, so let's rewind a bit and try to unravel what's going on with Kojima and *Metal Gear*.

All this started when fans started to notice some curious changes. References to Kojima Productions and Hideo Kojima were being removed from *MGS V*'s website and the box art for the game; a tweet from the Kojima Productions Twitter account was sent out pointing to a new official Twitter account for *MGS*; a document on Konami's website was discovered that showed Kojima would no longer be a director at the company. Naturally, this sparked speculation about whether Kojima had decided to leave Konami, or perhaps was being pushed out, with rumours that a power struggle between the publisher and Kojima Productions has led it to decide to make some drastic changes.

Konami and Kojima have responded to the rumours in some fashion, but their statements actually reveal very little. "The latest title in *Metal Gear* series, *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain* will be released as planned," Konami said. "Hideo Kojima will remain involved throughout." Okay, so Kojima will be 'involved', but what exactly does that mean?

If we read between the lines here then we can make some pretty confident judgements about what's going on. Konami's refusal to outright state that Kojima is not leaving the company means that he is, barring a dramatic reversal, out the door. Given the fact that he is still involved in developing *MGS V*, that means he will probably cut all ties with Konami officially some time after the game's release. With Kojima seemingly on his way out, that also means an end to Kojima Productions, at least in its current form – Konami may simply rebrand and reorganise the studio rather than laying its staff off.

What does this all mean for the future of *Metal Gear*? Well, in the short term, we expect very little

"WE'RE ACTUALLY QUITE EXCITED ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF KOJIMA MOVING ON TO DO SOMETHING NEW"



△○×□ We'll be leaving DD at home – we just cant handle the thought of him getting hurt.

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△○×□ We're genuinely excited about what *Metal Gear Online, The Phantom Pain*'s online component, could being to the game.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ Companion characters like Quiet and DD the wolf can be called upon to help you in battle.
- □ There are a bizarre array of gadgets to play with in *MGS V*'s multiplayer component.
- ✕ Missions will adapt to your play style, forcing you to adopt new tactics.
- ○ There are hints that a young Liquid Snake could make an appearance.

WHAT WILL KOJIMA DO NEXT?



PENGUIN ADVENTURE 2

500/1

Kojima's first game was *Penguin Adventure*. Perhaps the turmoil at Konami is due to his frustration at not being allowed to work on *Penguin Adventure 2*.



SNATCHER 2

250/1

Maybe it's time Kojima revisited *Snatcher*, the cyperpunk adventure game he directed in 1988? Konami own the rights, however, so he'd have to stay there.

METAL GEAR SOLID VI

100/1

As always with Hideo Kojima, there's every chance that he's played us like a damn fiddle and will do precisely what he always does: make another *Metal Gear*.

SOMETHING NEW...

1/50

The most likely (and probably best) outcome is that Kojima will move on to do something completely new. We can't wait to see what it is.

to change. With Kojima still leading *The Phantom Pain*'s development, it's hard to imagine that the internal turmoil evidently taking place at Konami will have too much of an impact on the game. It may be the case that Konami is unhappy with the level of influence Kojima has and it may well be taking steps to address that, but the idea that Kojima would let them interfere with *The Phantom Pain* in any significant way because of that seems incredibly unlikely (in any case, that would be inadvisable and impractical given that the game is in the late stages of development). Consequently, we're hopeful that *The Phantom Pain* will still end up being the incredible game we've been anticipating when it hits PS4 in September.

Once *The Phantom Pain* is done, things get far more interesting. Kojima himself has expressed a desire to move on from *Metal Gear* numerous times and, while he's reneged on promises that he would do so in the past, it now seems that is inevitable. We're excited about the prospect of Kojima moving on to do something new outside of *Metal Gear*, whether that be at another company or as the head of his own studio.

That doesn't mean *Metal Gear* is dead, with Konami saying that it "will continue to develop and distribute top-quality content in the *Metal Gear* series following *Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain*." Indeed, the company has pointed people to its job page as it looks for new people to continue work on *Metal Gear* (sans mention of Kojima Productions, of course). If that does mean the next *Metal Gear* will not involve Kojima, Konami is taking a huge risk. The *Metal Gear* series is the only true giant that the publisher has left and, with Kojima commanding a loyal fan base, the next entry in the series will get short shrift if it's not up to the high standard that's expected. Given how intertwined *Metal Gear* has been with Kojima's idiosyncratic approach to game design, we're not sure it's even possible for a new *Metal Gear* to please fans. We wait in anticipation to see what happens in the aftermath of *MGS V*'s release.

Paul Walker-Emig

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN is being developed at... actually, we're not sure. To find out more, sneak over here: **https://www.konami.com/mgs/**



ETA 2016 | **PUB** CAPCOM | **DEV** IN-HOUSE | **TWITTER** @STREETFIGHTER

Street Fighter V

"We can rebuild him. We have the technology..."

PS4

IT MAY BE its technical proficiency as a competitive fighter for which its hardcore fans love the *Street Fighter* series, but it's not necessarily that which made it popular in the first place. A large part of *Street Fighter*'s success has to be attributed to its cast of colourful, iconic characters. It was that diverse roster – composed of the likes of Ryu, Dhalsim, Blanka and Chun-Li – which captured the imagination of a generation when *Street Fighter II* took the world by storm.

and Chun-Li, but we've now been introduced to another character. He's one that those familiar with *Street Fighter* lore might be surprised to see: Charlie Nash. And why should we be surprised to see him? Because Charlie is meant to be dead. How do we explain Charlie's appearance in *Street Fighter V*, then? Well, it's quite clear that somebody has patched Charlie back together, stitching him back up in Frankenstein fashion. What we're saying is that Charlie is now some kind of zombie. With that new glowy eye in his head,

"SOMEBODY HAS PATCHED CHARLIE BACK TOGETHER, STITCHING HIM BACK UP IN FRANKENSTEIN FASHION"

There may well be other elements of *Street Fighter* that people have come to love as the series has evolved, but that connection with its eccentric characters remains.

With that in mind, a new character reveal for *Street Fighter V* is no insignificant thing. We were introduced to the game via series stalwarts Ryu

we're tempted to say he might even be a cyborg zombie. Fancy that. Our guess is that Bison is responsible for this and now controls Charlie, using him to carry out his deeds, but we'll have to wait to find out more on that one.

Of course, every new character reveal also gives us an opportunity to try and glean



△○×□ The best thing about Charlie right now is the mystery surrounding who is controlling him. Bison? Gill, maybe? Seth? IT MATTERS SO MUCH.

IN THE MEANTIME...

ULTRA STREET FIGHTER IV
A PS4 version of *Ultra Street Fighter IV* is due this Spring. That'll be ideal to tide you over until *Street Fighter V*.

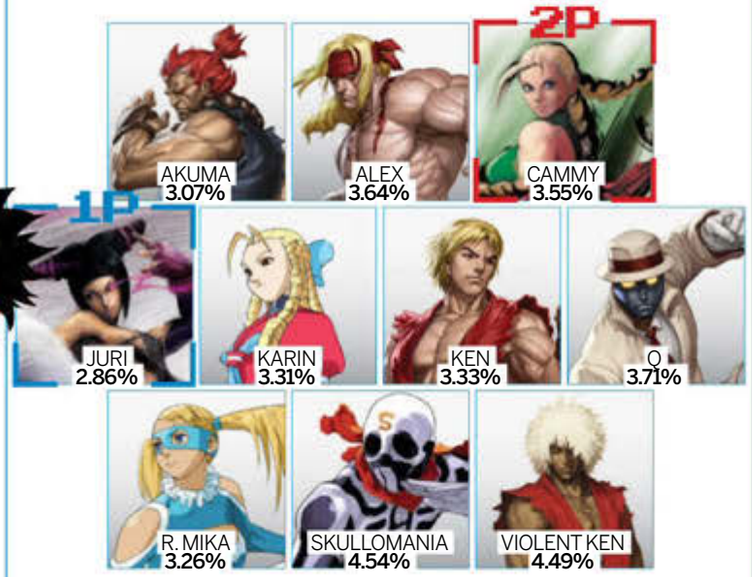


△○×□ Charlie's move set combines elements of his former style with dashes and teleports closer to Decapre's set.



STREET FIGHTER V'S FANTASY ROSTER

Back in issue 253, we had over 70,000 votes for who fans wanted to see playable in *Street Fighter V*. These are the characters that most people picked. "Anyone you want!" we said. "Ken!" you said. Sigh.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

△ You won't be able to play *Street Fighter V* on any console other than PS4.

□ The game's got a vibrant visuals, supplemented by flashy effects.

× It is being developed in the technologically-brilliant *Unreal Engine 4*.

○ Capcom is planning on running a beta program ahead of release to test the game.







△○×□ Ryu appears to be leaking ink from his feet. The only thing this can mean is that this isn't Ryu at all – it's actually master of disguise, Octodad.

something about what new mechanics might be introduced in *Street Fighter V*. On that note, Charlie's new teleportation ability points to some interesting possibilities. Charlie seems to be able to teleport in front of an opponent, behind them, or into the air, offering up a range of potential in how he attacks his opponent. More intriguing, however, is the fact that Charlie seems to use his teleportation ability as a way of cancelling out of moves – to give one example, he fires off a slow Sonic Boom and then cancels out of the animation, teleporting behind his foe. It's reasonable to assume that this costs meter, but what's less clear is whether this is a mechanic that's universal, or that's particular to Charlie. We've seen Ryu and Chun-Li powering up in some fashion in previous gameplay trailers and it's not unfeasible that in this state, each character has unique abilities, though it's equally possible that the characters all gain the same advantages when moving into this powered-up state. We're going to have to wait until we see some more of *Street Fighter V* to be sure.

Outside of the specifics, it's hard not to be positive about *Street Fighter V* on a more general level. Despite being very early on in development, Capcom has been confident enough to show off a full match at the Capcom Cup, in front of pros and the most hardcore fighting game fans. That it is prepared to show the game in a situation where it is going to come under the utmost scrutiny shows that it is assured in what it is doing with *Street Fighter V*. And why shouldn't it be? The series has been consistently great (save for one or two missteps), so there's good reason to be optimistic about where *Street Fighter V* will be when 2016 rolls around and the game hits PS4.

Paul Walker-Emig

STREET FIGHTER V is charging its meter in the offices of Capcom. Check the website for more details: **www.streetfighter.com**

IN THE MEANTIME...

BORDERLANDS If you're looking for wasteland mayhem, you can't go wrong with *Borderlands*. The first is a sparser than the second – a little more like *Mad Max*, then.



ETA 4 SEPTEMBER | **DEV** AVALANCHE STUDIOS | **PUB** WARNER BROS. | **TWITTER** @MADMAXGAME

Mad Max

How fast do ya wanna go?

PS4

MAX'S MAGNUM OPUS would murder the Batmobile. There, we said it. As awesome as Batman's new and improved ride seems to look, there's a new car in town that we're getting just a wee bit more excited for, and it's because we get to make it our very own. It's Mad Max's death machine, the Magnum Opus, and it seems everyone involved is getting rather excited about it.

Post-apocalyptic (sort of), desert-based revenge/car porn franchise *Mad Max* initially seems like an odd one to gamify, but Avalanche is fully embracing its bombastic weirdness. In fact, *Mad Max* seems to be taking more than a few cues from the successful *Batman: Arkham* series. Not only with the focus on the car, and by carving its own place out in an existing franchise – *Mad Max* isn't a cheap movie clone – but in the combat as well. Making good use of fists, knives and guns, there's a weightiness to the intense attacks and counter-attacks that feels rather familiar.

Which we don't mind, of course; *Arkham*'s combat is excellent. But it means that we're going to need a little more than solid-yet-recognisable combat to get fully involved with this game. An expanse of desert, albeit populated with freaks and maniacs, needs a damn good hook of a story. *Borderlands* did this well, but the first game still took several hours to get going and open up beyond the starting area. There *is* an emphasis on how it feels to be Max in this violent world, but from what we've seen, that's mostly the same as every other game: we're a good(ish) guy, capable of hilarious and brutal violence, slowly becoming more and more empowered and powerful throughout the course of the game. And we're not knocking that; it's a tried and tested template, and if you've seen the movies, you know what to expect. But what's *really* interesting us is the focus on the car, and how we can pimp the hell out of it.

Like the movies, it looks like the story is surely going to play second fiddle to revving engines, squealing tyres, and burning rubber. Sure, you might start off with a hunk of junk to begin with, but the Magnum Opus is just begging to be upgraded with all sorts of delightful murder-based modifications. Are you something of a firestarter? Yes, there are flamethrowers you can attach to



△○×□ There's going to be loads of customisation available to weaponise your car. Beautiful.

> "THE STORY IS SURELY GOING TO PLAY SECOND FIDDLE TO REVVING ENGINES AND SQUEALING TYRES"

your car. Want spikes on your tyres? Of *course* that's a thing. Do you fancy using the car itself as a massive blunt instrument of destruction? Slam away, friend. With all the choice that will apparently be on offer, we're sincerely looking forward to making ourselves a terrifyingly spiky rust bucket of fire and doom to charge around the desert in. The only issue we can foresee is if it's too easy or too difficult to get the upgrades you want. Yes, we'd like to play around in the world as quickly as possible (and burning everyone that cuts us up in a fiery blaze of death), but a sense of earned progression is going to be vital. The good news is that Avalanche has confirmed that there's going to be a hell of a lot of tweaking you can do to customise the vehicle, not in a standard random useful power skill tree upgrade sense, but in a more realistic (we didn't think we'd be using that word in this preview) sense of having to scavenge and search for parts you need, with every vehicle in the area a potential goldmine in scrap metal and second-hand car bits.

In fact, authenticity has been talked about a lot by Avalanche, and a lot of attention has been paid to making sure Max fits realistically into this open-world car porn fantasy. While *Mad Max* isn't going to fit into the survival genre in the traditional sense – you won't have an inventory that needs managing or certain tasks to complete before you're safe, for example – this is a world that will react to you, and that you can learn to read (like

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△○×□ Bullets will apparently be harder to find than petrol (or 'gas', as you'll have to call it).







WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ It's not trying to fit into the movie canon; *Mad Max* will be its own pre-movie thing.
- □ The car is going to be customisable, and basically the linchpin to the game itself.
- ✕ Explosions. Like, a bunch of explosions. But they'll have grounded justification.
- ○ Despite the necessity of scavenging for parts, it's not a generic survival game.

watching out for circling birds to indicate possible food sources). It's a dangerous place that you need to navigate carefully – at least to begin with – while you find your feet and deck out the Magnum Opus into a force to be reckoned with. Stray into the wrong parts of the desert (like The Big Nothing) and you're likely to get very dead very quickly if you're not prepared, as convoys of bigger, badder vehicles roam the sands. It sounds awesome.

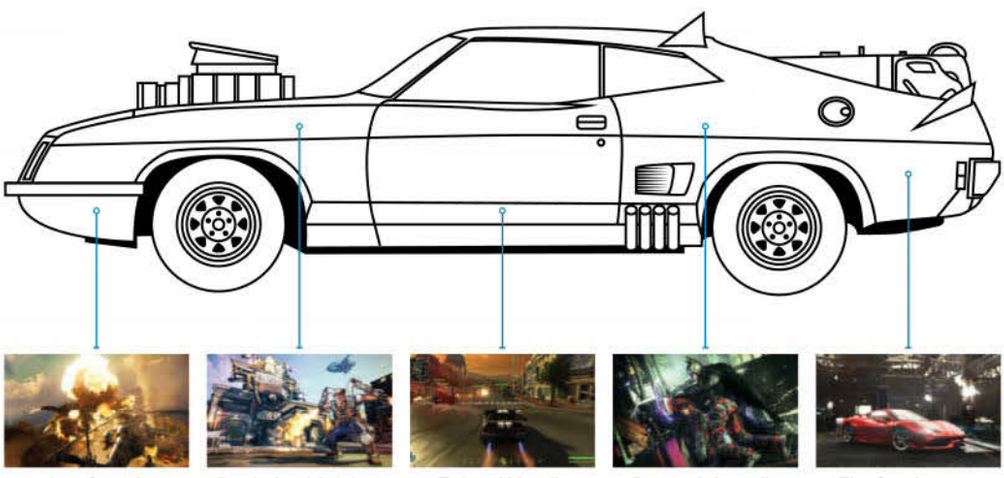
We have faith in videogame tie-ins of movies now, and we'd hate to have to make 'begrudging disappointment' our default mode again for new licensed games. As long as the combat is satisfying, explosions are plentiful, and our car becomes screaming death on wheels, we'll be happy. Although Batman might feel a little jealous.

Rebecca Richards

MAD MAX is being welded together by Avalanche Studios. Check out **avalanchestudios.com/madmax** to keep on top of the latest news.

UNDER THE BONNET

What kinds of components go into making a open-world car game that works?



Just Cause's explosive shenanigans.

Borderlands' violent and crazy post-apocalyptic world.

Twisted Metal's glorious vehicular carnage.

Batman's brutally effective and fluid combat.

The Crew's crazy level of car customisation.

BE THE 'SAUR



Whether or not you'll be able to play as the above creator of chaos, we're not too sure, but what we do know is that 20 playable dinosaurs are going to feature in the game, each with their own unique abilities, traits and characteristics. A dinosaur customiser will also be available, giving you the power to create your very own beasts, using parts and abilities from the playable dinosaurs. Think *Weird Science* but with more teeth.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- △ The game is shaping up to be the prettiest Lego game that we have seen.
- □ It will give players the chance to recreate those special *Jurassic* movie moments.
- ✕ Four movies in one game should provide you with more than enough content.
- ○ We get to see Lego versions of Jeff Goldblum and the late Richard Attenborough in action.

△○✕□ Trying to transport pyrotechnic equipment can be very tricky, especially when it virtually blinds you in the process.

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PRIOR FORM

LEGO BATMAN 3 A mediocre return for the Caped Crusader and pals, the third instalment in the DC Lego universe lacked the creativity of its Marvel counterpart.

ETA JUNE | **DEV** TT GAMES | **PUB** WARNER BROS. | **TWITTER** @TTGAMES

Lego Jurassic World

"You said you've got a T-Rex?"

PS4

ALSO COMING TO PS3 & VITA

WE ALL HAVE our reasons for not doing something, and Dr. Alan Grant had more than most when he decided not to endorse Jurassic Park. From the ill-tempered T-Rex that stalked him and his pals, to the Velociraptors who just wouldn't take no for an answer, you can't blame the man for wanting nothing to do with a place whose inhabitants tried to eat him.

Thankfully, TT Games hasn't been scared off by these stories of disgruntled dinosaurs, deciding to transform Dr. Grant's antics, along with the rest of the *Jurassic* film franchise, into an interactive playground of virtual bricks, despite the fictitious perils. "A game based on this property is something that I think a lot of film fans, as well as videogame fans, have wanted for quite a while now," says Tim Wileman, TT Games' associate producer. "It's something we've wanted to do as well, but have never really had to the chance to work with for various reasons. With the new film coming out – and with Spielberg getting involved again – it's reignited the excitement."

Being made in conjunction with the up-and-coming box office contender, the game will feature *Jurassic World*, with the new film as well as older *Jurassic Park* content being available from the very beginning. It's an interesting option, one that will allow players who don't wish to follow the story chronologically to choose where they wish to start their adventure from. As for the game's hubs, these will apparently take the form of the two *Jurassic* islands: Isla Nublar and Isla Sorna. Presumably what hub you're in will depend on what film you've been playing through, with the first and fourth films being attached to Isla Nublar and the second and third Isla Sorna. Additionally, *Lego Jurassic World* will also feature real-time weather. "As you move around the levels and the hubs, the time of day will change," Wileman explains. "It all comes back to authenticity, you know? We want the games to feel as true to the source material as they possibly can, even down to the camera angles, weather, and time of day."

As excited as we are about the prospect of night falling at a potentially perilous moment, what excites us most about *Lego Jurassic World*, however, are the customisation options. "You can create your own characters from the 100 [preloaded] ones," Tim explains. Making your very own Dora The Dinosaur Explorer sounds like fun, although it's more than likely that characters will have to be unlocked in order for you to use their parts. As for those of you who wish to learn more about the extinct species, TT Games has created an Information Centre in *Lego Jurassic World*, where you can bring up trivia and facts about dinosaurs. "One of the objectives with this game was to bring a layer of informative play to it," explains Wileman. "It is something I think kids will enjoy learning about and find quite fun because it's interactive. It should add a nice layer of gameplay to the title."

With the developers gaining access to the *Jurassic* film assets, this game looks set to be every bit as authentic as we've come to expect from a Lego adaptation. Combining iconic action-packed scenes, with TT Games' usual blasts of humour, *Lego Jurassic World*'s mixture of new and old ideas sounds intriguing in theory, but whether this game will prove to be an exciting addition to the series or just another brick in its wall, we'll have to wait and see. Either way, for fans of both the *Lego* and *Jurassic* franchises, there's plenty to be excited for here, Jeff Goldblum's silky, sarcastic tones being at the top of our list.

Emma Quinlan

LEGO JURASSIC WORLD is being assembled brick-by-brick by TT Games. For more details, go to the games Facebook page: **www.facebook.com/LEGOJurassic**



△○×□ Sometimes dinosaurs need a kip too, something that Ellie clearly hasn't thought about what with all her inconsiderate shouting.

"MAKING YOUR VERY OWN DORA THE DINOSAUR EXPLORER SOUNDS LIKE FUN"

ANATOMY OF... TIDUS

Those of you with a Vita or PS3 may have already had the pleasure of playing the HD remaster of Final Fantasy X and X-2. If you've not, you'll be pleased to see that Tidus alongside Yuna and her guardians are on a pilgrimage to PS4...



BLITZ ACE

In his home city of Zanarkand, Tidus is a star of the sport of Blitzball, which is a bit like a mix of football and handball, played underwater. You'll probably spend an inordinate amount of time playing the semi-turn-based sport as you progress through *Final Fantasy X* and you'll find that Tidus will be your star offensive player. Make sure you have Tidus learn the Jecht Shot for some easy goals.

HOMEWARD BOUND

At the beginning of *Final Fantasy X*, Tidus' home city of Zanarkand is attacked by a monstrous creature called Sin. In the wake of the attack, Tidus finds himself in the world of Spira. After hooking up with locals Wakka, Lulu and Yuna, the group ends up on a quest to defeat the creature that's terrorising their world and that has destroyed Zanarkand.

A DARK PAST

Though Tidus appears carefree, it becomes clear that there's something a bit darker behind that façade. You'll find out that Tidus has had a rocky relationship with his father, Jecht. Over the course of the game, however, he'll be forced to revaluate his thoughts on his father. You will also have to rethink precisely who or what Tidus is, though we will leave that for you to discover for yourself.

PERFECT TIMING

As is tradition with most protagonists in *Final Fantasy* games, Tidus wields a sword and is rather nimble in battle. He can also cast time magic, such as Haste and Slow. Having said that, one of the cool things about *Final Fantasy X* is that its Sphere Grid system can set characters to a specific class or allow you to build their stats as you like.

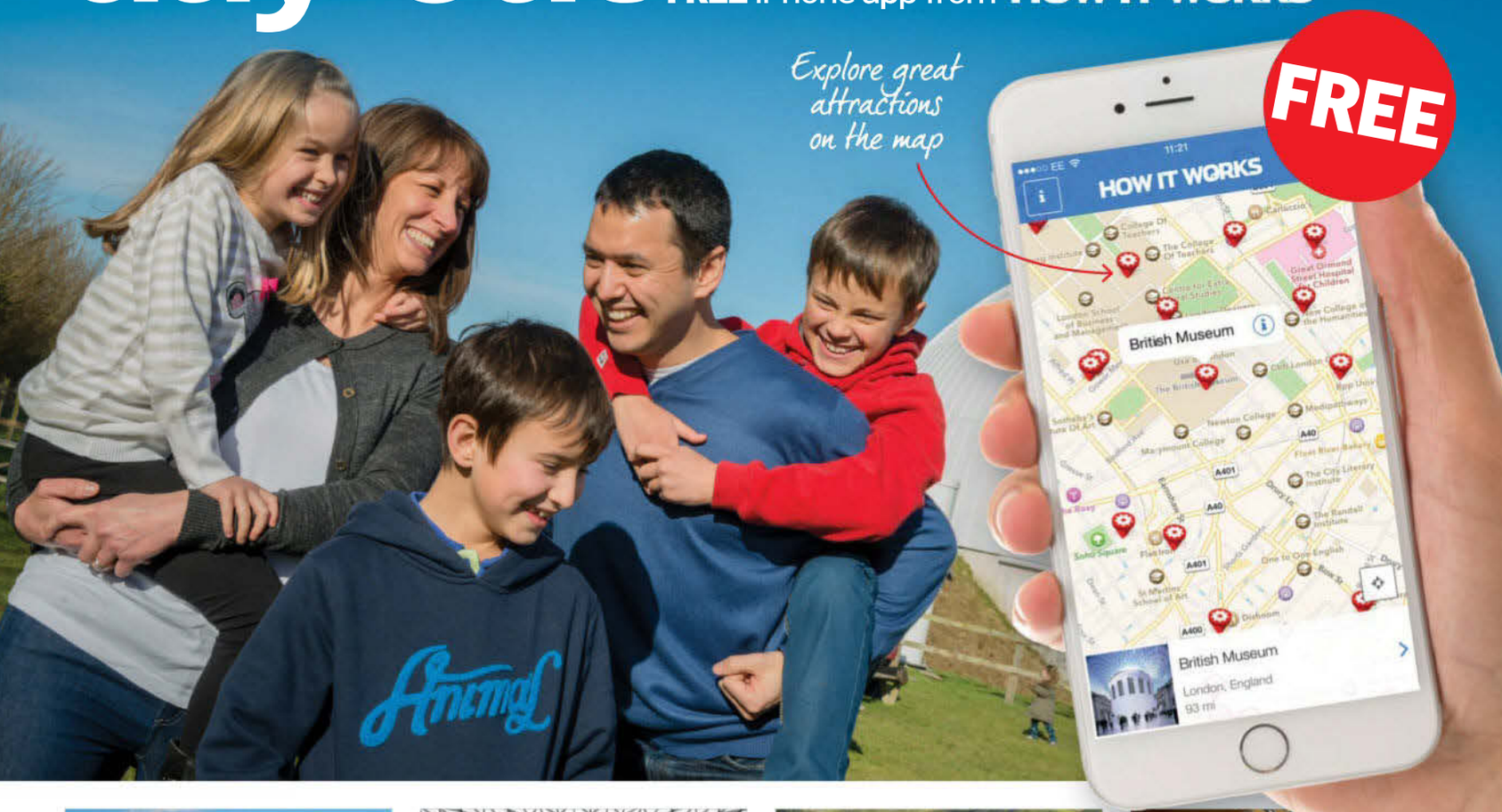
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Final Fantasy X/X-2 HD Remaster PS4

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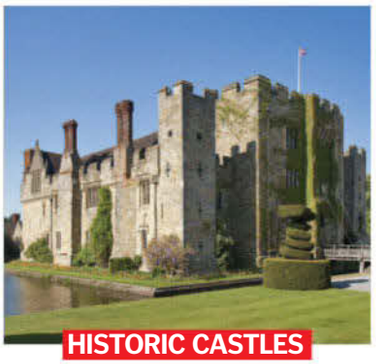

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Elite: Dangerous PS4

A LEGEND RETURNS

The original *Elite*, released back in 1984, has obtained legendary status. Described by some as the first truly open-world game, *Elite* was genre defining and it is arguably one of the most influential videogames of all time. Since the third game in the series released in 1995, *Elite* has been absent for some time, but, with *Elite: Dangerous*, the series has risen from the ashes to hit PC and it is now on its way to PS4.

TRADE OFF

Fitting for a game in which trading and commerce play key roles, *Elite* made its return as a result of a proposition made via Kickstarter – 'you fans give us your money and we'll make the new *Elite* game that you want'. At the beginning of January 2013, it turned out that was a deal that fans were happy to shake on, with *Elite: Dangerous* raking in £1,578,316 in funding after setting an ambitious £1,250,000 goal.

ROLE PLAYING

Part of the appeal of *Elite* – and here, you'll see similarities to games that have followed in the *Elite* series' footsteps, such as *No Man's Sky* and *EVE Online* – is that you are able to be whoever you want as you explore the universe. You can be a trader, picking up resources then flying to a space station in another system to sell them, or, you could be a smuggler, a pirate, an assassin... you decide what your priorities are.

THERE'S LIFE OUT THERE

The biggest difference between *Elite: Dangerous* and its predecessors is that those games, what with being released before the internet and all, didn't have online multiplayer. With *Elite: Dangerous*, there's potential to team up or battle with other players that you come across. If multiplayer gaming has taught us anything, it's that other players are going to be the most dangerous entity you will encounter.

STARS ARE THE LIMIT

Elite: Dangerous' universe is huge, as it is comprised of 400 billion star systems. Its planets and moons have day/night cycles as a result of the fact that they orbit in real-time. Like *No Man's Sky*, many of the game's star systems are procedurally generated. However, around 150,000 of them have been constructed using real astronomical data. We think the prospect of visiting real-life star systems is pretty cool.

ON A MISSION



While exploring the stars and planets of *Elite: Dangerous*, you will come across bulletin boards that allow you to take on a variety of different missions and errands in order to earn yourself some of that sweet, sweet space cash.



Assassination and Bounty Hunting missions both send you after targets to take down. The difference is that where Assassination missions send you after specific NPCs, Bounty Hunting missions ask you to take down members of particular factions.



For something a bit less violent, you can take on Courier missions, which ask you to deliver a message to a specific station; you can also undertake Charity missions, which will see you out of pocket, but will provide a significant boost to your reputation.



Then there are the most fun sounding of all: Piracy missions. These require you to steal goods and return them to whoever made the request. You'll obviously need to kit your ship out with the appropriate tech to help you find and steal the cargo in question.

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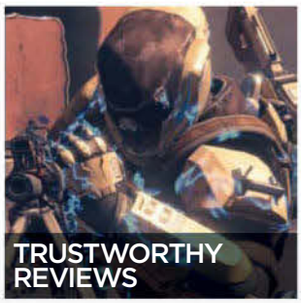


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PREVIEW

A quick look at some of the other awesome games that are just around the corner

1 TEMBO THE BADASS ELEPHANT

FORMAT: PS4
RELEASE DATE: SUMMER 2015

IT'S ALREADY A candidate for our 'Best Game Title Of 2015' award, but what actually is *Tembo The Badass Elephant*? Well, we'll tell you. *Tembo* is a side-scrolling 2D platformer by the Pokémon team, rendered in a comic book art style, in which you play as (you guessed it) a badass elephant, and who wouldn't want to play as an elephant, let alone a badass one? Smashing through buildings, battling enemies and collecting peanuts is the order of the day for this openly silly platformer. At the right price, we reckon this could be a cool little downloadable game. Remember: Tembo is part commando, but all elephant.

2 PROJECT CARS

FORMAT: PS4
RELEASE DATE: MAY 2015

WE SUSPECT THAT the appetite for *Project Cars* might have been whetted somewhat by the racing games that we have had on PS4 so far. *Driveclub* is a good game, but the problems it had at launch has soured people on it somewhat. Then there was *The Crew*, which, to put it bluntly, wasn't very good. This has only increased the anticipation for *Project Cars*, the racer that people are hoping that is actually *good* on launch. It's looking spectacular from a visual perspective and the hands-on time we've had with the game has left us feeling pretty positive. Be wary, though: if you are looking for an arcade-style racer, this is definitely not for you. *Project Cars* is a racing simulator through and through.



1


2




4

3 PAYDAY 2: CRIMEWAVE EDITION

FORMAT: PS4
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 2015

IT'LL BE INTERESTING to see how well the *Crimewave Edition* of *Payday 2* does when it hits PS4. Will the promise of improved visuals and all the DLC released for the PC version be enough to tempt those who have already played the game on PS3? Will those that weren't interested by the game's original release be won over by the prospect of playing on PS4? We don't know. What we do know is that *Payday 2* is a fairly good game (we gave the PS3 release 79%) and that if you can persuade two or three friends to get the game and join you on bank jobs and high street hold-ups online, then you're going to have a good time.

4 GODZILLA: THE GAME

FORMAT: PS4, PS3
RELEASE DATE: JULY 2015

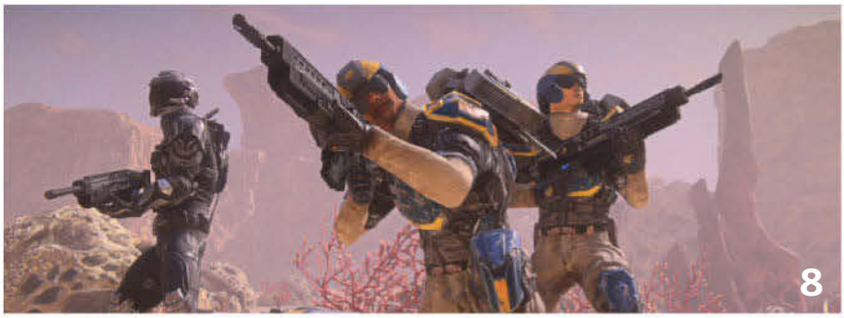
IT CAME OUT in Japan some time ago, but the famous monster is now preparing to make his way over to this side of the world. The game looks rather stupid, but not necessarily in a bad way. After all, the concept of Godzilla is silly – he's a massive nuclear lizard who fights giant moths and aliens. The game's got a Destruction mode which is all about stomping around as the titular Kaiju and smashing stuff up alongside a King Of The Monsters mode where you battle monsters like Mothra and Mechagodzilla. The game does look a little bit on the ropey side, but let's wait until it's here before casting final judgement.


3



ROUNDUP











5 YAKUZA 5

FORMAT: PS3
RELEASE DATE: Q3 2015

THE YAKUZA SERIES is one that's arguably not had the credit that it deserves in the West, but it's got itself a loyal fanbase. Indeed, Sony got so many requests to being *Yakuza 5* to Europe and the US that it decided to oblige. Fittingly, given that it is the fifth entry in the series, the game takes place across five different locations and has five main protagonists that become embroiled in an escalating war between the Tojo and Ueno Yakuza clans. The *Yakuza* games have been using the same engine since *Yakuza 3*, but that's all thankfully changing with this latest installment, giving us hopes that this could be a bigger leap forward for this well-loved and cult open world series.

6 GOD OF WAR III: REMASTERED

FORMAT: PS4
RELEASE DATE: 14 JULY

IF YOU'RE ONE of those people that finds the amount of HD remakes coming to PS4 distasteful, we're sorry, but it doesn't look like it's going to stop any time soon. Yes, ladies and gentleman, we've got another one on its way in the form of a *God Of War III* remaster – good news if your new to PlayStation, as *God Of War III* is a great action game. With rumours rife that *God Of War IV* could be announced at E3 2015, we are hoping that the July release of the *God Of War III* has been set purely to capitalise on the excitement of a post-*God Of War IV* announcement, because we can't wait to see the series make its *proper* debut on PS4.

7 ROCK BAND 4

FORMAT: PS4
RELEASE DATE: Q4 2015

AH, THE PLASTIC instrument craze. It burned brightly before dying as quickly as it came into being. A resurrection is on the horizon, however, with *Rock Band 4* being developed by Harmonix and due to hit PS4 by the end of the year. Do you still have your old plastic instruments floating about ? If so, we've got good news: Harmonix says it is working extensively on a way to make them compatible with *Rock Band 4*. It's also heartening to hear that Harmonix plans to bring all the *Rock Band* DLC content you already own from previous iterations over to *Rock Band 4*. The *Rock Band* series is great, so we're looking forward to a return, and, to be fair, rocking with friends never gets old.

8 PLANETSIDE 2

FORMAT: PS4
RELEASE DATE: Q3 2015

IT'S GOING TO be fascinating to see how *Planetside 2* is received on console. The reason being that *Planetside 2* feels incredibly opaque to newcomers, failing to explain how its systems works and how best to engage in battles that take place on a scale that most players won't be used to. PC players are more used to games that fail to explain themselves. Console players, not so much. By the time *Planetside 2* comes to PS4 perhaps the game will explain itself a bit better than it does in the beta. In any case, it would be a shame if *Planetside 2* was disregarded just because it's not as gratifying as, say, *Call Of Duty*, because we think it's a game that can give back to those that put the time into it.

HOT TOPIC 60FPS

PAUL WALKER-EMIG
STAFF WRITER, PLAY



"ITS A SOULLESS, ARTLESS APPROACH TO TAKE"

THE CURRENT OBSESSION with 1080p/60fps gaming is in serious danger of killing creativity. How many times have you seen a new game announced only to see developers and journalists bombarded with the same question: 'does it run at 60fps?' People don't seem to care about what you do in the game, how its mechanics work, or, god forbid, if it's any good. All they want to know is: 'if I were to look at this game for precisely one second, how many frames would I see?' The message we are giving by obsessing over such technical concerns is clear – don't focus your attention on trying new, innovative things; don't put too much of your energy to trying to craft an engaging story; don't spend all your time tweaking and balancing to get the feel of a game just right. If all of that must be sacrificed at the altar of next-gen 60fps gaming, then so be it; frame-rate is your new god and all else fades into insignificance.

Clearly, that's not the way things should be. In holding up 60fps as a vital goal for which to strive, we're at risk of subjugating everything that makes games special to hand-wringing over technical concerns. It is a soulless, artless approach to take to the medium. We should be talking about how a videogame's mechanics can engage, surprise and challenge us, create a compulsion to explore and discover, or help us to see things from a new perspective. We should be talking about how games can spark excitement, create bonds with characters and places in a way that no other medium can, make us feel happy, melancholy, angry or scared. We should be talking about how they can enhance all that with artistic flair, soundtracks, well-written stories, and so on. After all, are those not the things that make games worth playing?







You already know the answer to this question. Think back to favourite gaming experiences, the games that you love the most. What made them special? The frame-rate? Don't be ridiculous. It may have been a mechanic that you've never seen before that you captured your imagination, characters that worked their way into your heart, a balanced multiplayer experience that had you and your friends laughing and whooping as you battled back and forth, an artful combination of visuals and audio that coalesced to create a beautiful world for you to explore, but it sure as hell wasn't the frame-rate.



△○×□ Paul doesn't care about frame-rate – he just wants to be terrified by Big Daddies.

Ask anyone to tell you why *Metal Gear Solid*, *Shadow Of The Colossus*, *BioShock*, *Dark Souls*, or whatever else it may be, is their favourite game and we guarantee the frame-rate will not be mentioned. Indeed, I remember a certain Darran Jones saying that his favourite game of all time is *The Last of Us*. How many fps did it run at on PS3? 30 at best. The point here is that the things that led to the game being hailed as the pinnacle of a generation were its well-told story, its skillfully written characters, its intense combat – not the frame-rate.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not against games running at 60fps – my argument is that videogames can give us the kind of experiences that make us love them with *or without* 60fps. We've already got games that prove it. In the face of that, the argument that 60fps gaming is of vital importance quickly falls apart.

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DARRAN JONES
EDITOR, RETRO GAMER

"MANY GAMES RAN AT 60FPS ON THE PS2"

IT'S AMAZING HOW the opinions of people change because publishers tell them it should. Go back before the beginning of this current generation and most couldn't give a crap about games running at 60fps because they wanted so-called 'cinematic experiences'. What a load of crap! You can still have cinematic experiences where the core gameplay runs at 60fps. In fact, while we're at it, what people genuinely believe that any game is better at 30 frames-per-second? Show me a gamer who genuinely believes that *The Last Of Us* is better on PS3 because it's a "cinematic game" that runs better at 30fps and I'll show them a mirror so they can see the liar reflected within it.

Now I'm no fan of Sony's next-gen update of the Naughty Dog classic, but I'll admit that it's a wonderfully fluid experience that runs amazingly well at 60fps. I've seen my cousin effortlessly pull off moves that wouldn't have been anywhere near as natural on the PS3 version and it's all thanks to the exceptionally smooth frame-rate that the PS4 version runs at. 60fps matters – that's why *Dark Souls II* fans all masturbated furiously over the PS4 upgrade, as they knew it would make a big difference to the gameplay (and it did).







△○×□ *Dark Souls II* may indeed run at 60fps on PS4, but that doesn't necessarily make it any easier.

It's mainly assumed that only fighting games and first-person shooters truly benefit from the higher frame-rate but that's bobbins of the highest sodding order. Racing games are wonderful at high frame-rates, third-person shooters and adventures dazzle when running at a slick frame-rate and puzzle games... well, puzzles games can sod off to digital because nobody seems to care about them any more.

Of course, the main reason why people proclaim that 30fps is perfectly fine is that we've been stuck in this crappy HD generation for so long that gamers have genuinely forgotten that plenty of games used to run at 60fps and looked silky smooth as a result. If you've access to a half-decent PC (by which I mean one that's around the same price as a PS4) you'll be able to play most recent games still at 60 frames-per-second. Admittedly you'll have to make a few sacrifices on the graphic front, but you'll happily accept it because ALL GAMES RUN AND LOOK BETTER AT 60 FRAMES-PER-F**KING-SECOND.

Because we've been dazzled by shitty particle effects, shading, anti-jibjob filters (I may have made that last one up) and various other buzzwords, we'd rather games ran pretty

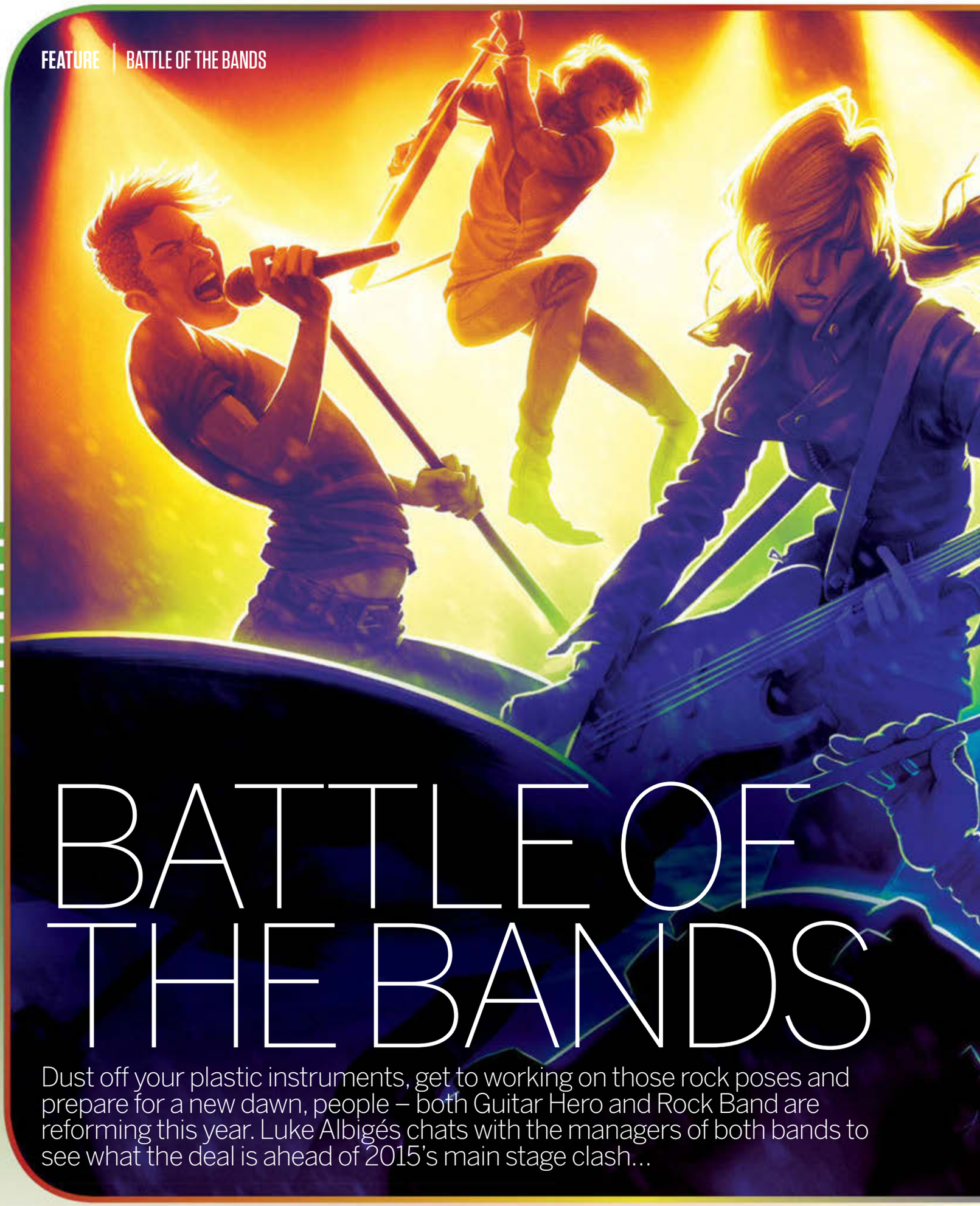


than smoothly. Hell, we'll settle for games that simply manage a stable 30fps, most of the time, such is the doctrine that publishers have instilled in us. *God Of War*, *Gran Turismo 3*, *Jak And Daxter*, *Ratchet And Clank*, *Devil May Cry*, *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast* are just a few of the many high-profile games that ran at 60fps on PS2 and it's amazing to think that we've taken such a significant step back just so we can gawp at a some pretty visuals that don't really make any difference to the gameplay of the titles we're actually playing. Still, as is often the case, developers are rarely hitting that magic 60fps because they know they don't need to and that you'll buy these games regardless. As with these HD remasters, you have once again let me down.

WHO DO YOU AGREE WITH?
Let us know via social media

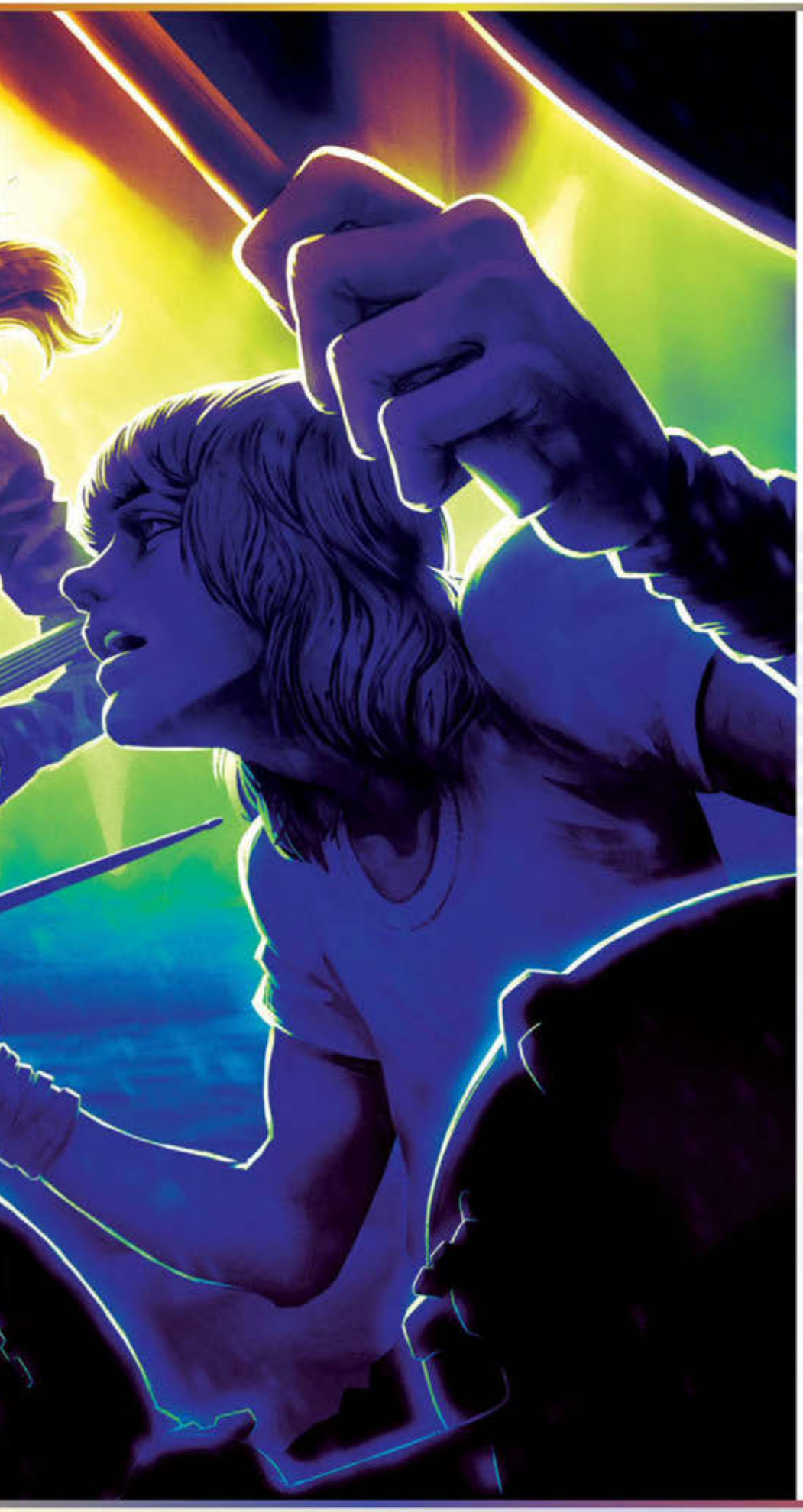
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BATTLE OF THE BANDS

Dust off your plastic instruments, get to working on those rock poses and prepare for a new dawn, people – both Guitar Hero and Rock Band are reforming this year. Luke Albigés chats with the managers of both bands to see what the deal is ahead of 2015's main stage clash...

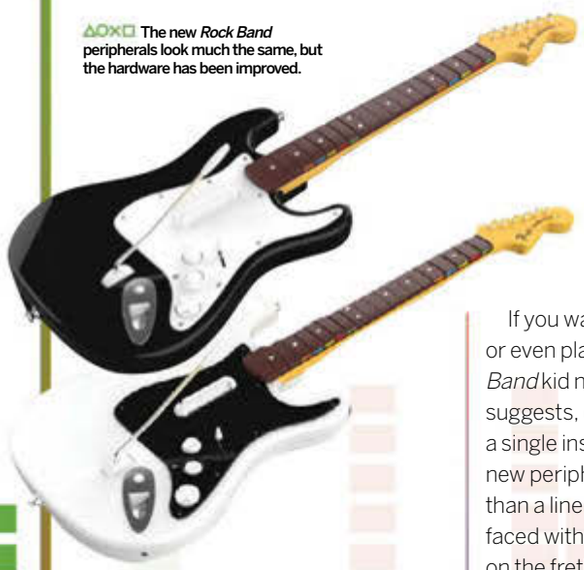


If there's one thing we love here on Play, it's rhythm action games. Having grown up on a diet of *PaRappa*, *Vib Ribbon* and *Dancing Stage*, witnessing the rock takeover of the genre through *Guitar Hero* was a wonderful thing for us. But like many others, we enjoyed it too much. We enjoyed it irresponsibly and we paid the price. Rabid uptake on band-based music games quickly led us to the stage where we'd see a new one every few months, and that horrible beast called Apathy wasn't far behind the hype train. Long story short, it caught up. With fans burned out on music games, two household names were effectively declared dead overnight and our all-too-brief rock-and-roll love affair was over. Harmonix at least had the decency to call every now and again, expressing its reciprocated love for us via DLC tunes we didn't really want. But we bought them anyway, just in case. Just in case. And now, we couldn't be happier that we did.

Yes, the two major players in music games are both coming back this year, and perhaps the best news (for both them *and* us) is that they won't be going directly head-to-head like they did in the past. As we understand it, *Rock Band 4* will pare things back a little to offer the full band experience without any of the fat (read: keyboards and Pro instruments, bar drums, are gone) whereas the new *Guitar Hero* team – none other than Freestyle Games, the folks behind the wonderful *DJ Hero* – has gone back to the drawing board to reinvent the series in the same vein in which it first began. But all of this exciting discussion of impending rock which we are about to experience begs one question: why now?

"GUITAR HERO WAS A WONDERFUL THING FOR US. BUT LIKE MANY OTHERS, WE ENJOYED IT TOO MUCH"

"When we were starting to think about why we wanted to bring *Rock Band* back, and why this – right now – might be the right time, we had to go back to it," explains Harmonix producer, Daniel Sussman. "We went back and started playing it, and played through it all. *Rock Band*, *Rock Band 2*, *Rock Band 3*, *The Beatles*... as we were playing them, we realised there are quite a few things we had learned, in terms of our relationship to *Rock Band* and also our maturity as designers and developers. We could just see all this stuff that we could improve. *Rock Band* has a lot of elements that are pretty simple, and the core fantasy it's about is pretty easy to explain – that's what I love about it the most. But that



△○×□ The new *Rock Band* peripherals look much the same, but the hardware has been improved.



△○×□ The minimal screen furniture lets the live experience take centre stage. It's really quite something.



△○×□ Perform well and the crowd will literally worship you at your feet, but keep missing notes and you'll see the fans (and band) take a nasty turn.

means that *Rock Band* is elevated to have this evergreen quality: if you like music, you will like *Rock Band*."

Freestyle Games boss, Jamie Jackson, is similarly enthusiastic about the rebirth of *Guitar Hero*, offering his own reasoning as to why 2015 is the right time to get the band back together. "We always said that we'd come back when we had some great innovation," he tells us. "Everyone loved *Guitar Hero*, but we want something new. I think that with the new gameplay, Live, first-person and GHTV, we've kinda done alright in terms of innovation and hopefully made something that people look at and say 'I want to play that again'."

Okay, some of that might need a little explaining – just as *Rock Band 4* will focus on the band experience that has been at the heart of the series since Harmonix went chasing its dream of recreating band life, Freestyle is looking to recapture the magic of the early days of *Guitar Hero*, when all eyes were on the Axemaster. And so it shall be once again.

If you want to play drums, or sing, or even play bass, you're a *Rock Band* kid now. As the name rightly suggests, *Guitar Hero* is back to being a single instrument game and the new peripheral reflects this. Rather than a line of five buttons, you're now faced with two banks of three buttons on the fretboard, 'low' and 'high' if you're thinking in terms of actual guitar strings. Veterans will be thrown for a loop by the lack of colours or traditional notation but it really doesn't take long for it to click – if anything, the new set-up allows for more interesting (and dare we say realistic) chord shapes while making logical sense.

Chugging bassy patterns will hog the black low notes while lead flourishes will generally work off the high white notes and once your hands adapt to a new format that spits on a decade of tradition, you'll welcome the shift. Up the difficulty and you'll find yourself forcing your hands into either very alien or very familiar shapes, depending on your string-strumming abilities – the notation for chords, double stops and odd twin-string harmonies might be new, but it's incredible just how quickly you'll be able to pick it up if you've a proficiency for music, guitar, rhythm games or any combination of the above. Despite having to relearn everything, we were back on Veteran (the new Expert) within three songs, but that relearning process was one of the most satisfying we've had in the genre since we first embraced the idea that maybe the fifth button wasn't evil after all.

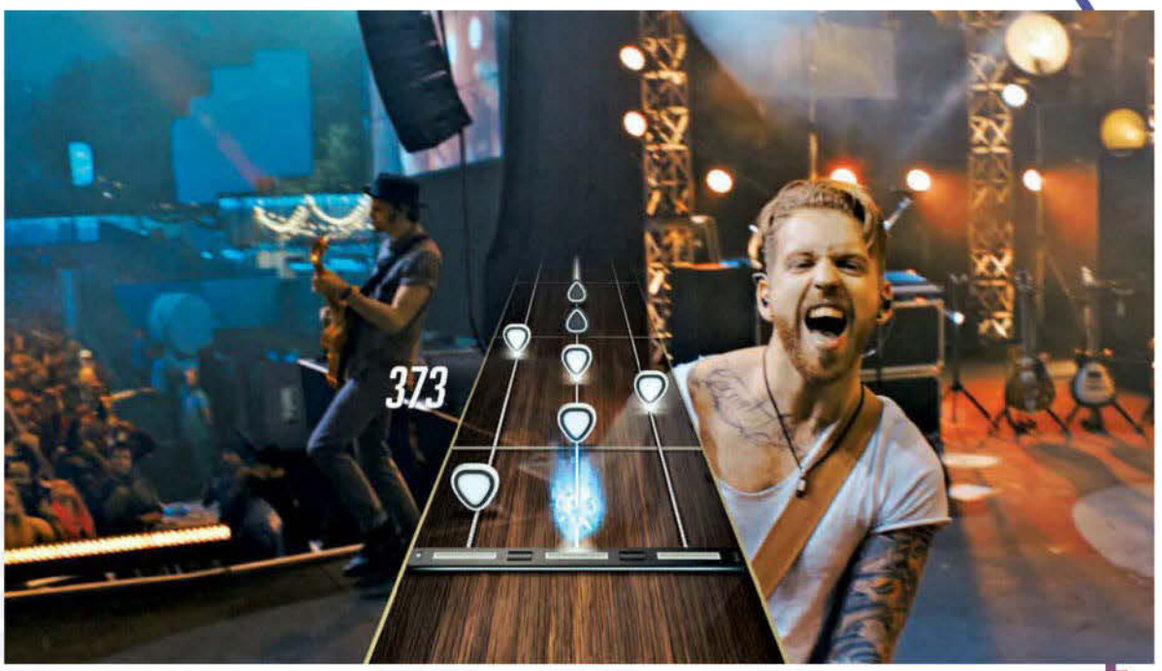
It may seem at this point that we're more invested in discussing *Guitar Hero*, but the reasons here are twofold – for one, it's the only game of the two that we've actually had the pleasure of playing, and second, it's the one that seems to have most to prove at this point. Harmonix built this corner of the genre with the very franchise it now finds itself sort-of-competing with (history lesson: Harmonix made the original *Guitar Hero* and its sequel), but so well has it carved its niche that little has to change between one generation and the next. *Rock Band 4* won't be a radical diversion from what you know and love – it'll be three instrument staves and one vocal chart just as it has always been, but that lack of change means there's a very real chance that most of your existing DLC will work with the new game. Specifics are still being locked down and it's likely that this will only work on a per-platform basis (as in Xbox DLC won't work on PlayStation platforms) but chances are if you're bought a song for PS3 *Rock Band*, you'll also get to enjoy it on PS4 when the new game arrives.

"GUITAR HERO IS BACK TO BEING A SINGLE INSTRUMENT GAME AND THE PERIPHERAL REFLECTS THIS. YOU'RE NOW FACED WITH TWO BANKS OF THREE BUTTONS"

www.imagineshop.co.uk

DLC and add-on content in general are arguably what killed music games last time around, so it'll be interesting to see what both parties bring to the stage in this respect. If the recent DLC drop is anything to go by, Harmonix will likely carry on in much the same manner – offer a catalogue of songs and charge for the ones fans will want to play over and over. Freestyle, though, is going for something different. "We wanted to come up with something that allowed players to have a ton of fun online together but that also allowed them to get content in a different way," Jackson explains. "In 2010, we saw a lot less connected consoles. We ended up having to do discs for people, which got us to this place where we were trying to hit the demand but had discs getting in the way all the time. But with GHTV, we don't have to do that anymore – we've been able to come up with a new way of being able to give people content."

GHTV is, as Jackson claims, a completely new way of enjoying music games. While the game will ship with its own full track list, this online mode offers a whole lot more. Tune in at the right time, see what's happening and stake your claim. Live 'shows' will run to a schedule, meaning you might sign in to find a modern rock hour on one channel and pure classics on another – there's no need to download the DLC, so all you have to do is jump right in and rock all the way out. If Freestyle manages to find the time to chart and monitor enough songs, this could be rhythm action paradise, although spotting a 'Premium' option in the menus did make us think that this too-good-to-be-true deal may actually be a little more limited than it initially seems. Still, even if that *is* the case, you're still looking at an ongoing DLC substitute of some description, which certainly can't hurt.



△○×□ **The new *GH* notation is simple, yet still alien for anyone used to five coloured blobs...**

△○×□ **GHTV sees you playing over on-demand music videos rather than bespoke live footage.**





△○×□ **Expect to see the first actual shots of *Rock Band 4* (this is *RB3*) around E3. It's gonna be big...**

Hold up – what about those old instruments we referenced in the intro to this feature? For *Guitar Hero*, they're out (barring some plastic-bending witchcraft), but how about *Rock Band*? Can the team get PS3 tech working on PS4? "We're consistently surprised by how many people tell us that they still have their hardware – the old guitars and drums," says Sussman. "As far as we're concerned, that's an investment they've made in the franchise, and we're working as hard as we can to support that investment. It's a very interesting bit of development work; we can do things to help out the compatibility on the software side, but there's a lot of heavy lifting on the first-party side, too." Fingers crossed they can make it all work – a Pro drumkit is a hell of a piece of kit to have to throw away – and between software solutions and USB devices such as TitanOne and CronusMax, it seems like we should be able to make most of our old gear work on PS4. Score.

It appears, then, that the two games are chasing very different crowds – *Rock Band* is looking to win back its old fan base with promises of functional DLC libraries and existing audiences while *Guitar Hero* is seemingly going back to its score-chasing formative years, only with a new instrument to learn. And that sounds perfect. Nothing could be worse for either franchise or fans than splitting allegiances at this early stage in the comeback and each offers something different now. *Rock Band* will be the tried and true simulated full band experience while *Guitar Hero* looks to wrap score-chasers up in the moment, be it playing along live with hordes or other wannabes or living the dream in the new live-action, first-person video that fits with each song and even adapts to how well you are performing – there's little better in the way of encouragement than approaching the runway for a huge solo only to learn that the hipsters entrenched below strongly believe that you can do better.

So, it's looking like *Rock Band* for full-on multiplayer, or *Guitar Hero* for dream-living, leaderboard-chasing nu-fretboard action. Or, better yet, both – as we say, each has managed to carve itself a niche for this comeback tour and we wish both the best of luck. May the best band win...

VIDEOGAME KRYPTONITE

PAUL WALKER-EMIG ASKS, WHY IS IT THAT SUPERHEROES AND TERRIBLE VIDEOGAMES GO HAND-IN-HAND?

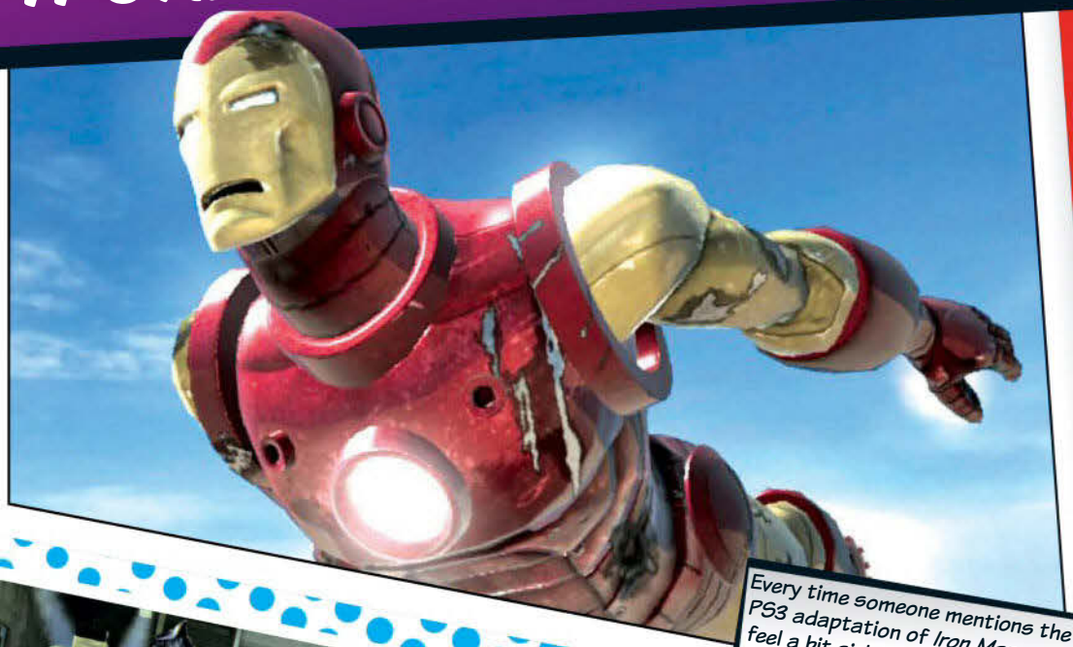
Videogames are capable of doing many things – they can inspire friendly competition, help us see things from a new perspective, elicit moments of joy and sadness and much more. One of the more commonly lauded aspects of the medium is its ability to provide a form of escapism, to empower us with abilities that we don't have in the real world and allow us to do things that wouldn't be possible within the realms of our reality. Surely that makes videogames and superheroes an ideal fit? Both provide escapism, both can imbue their subjects with powers beyond normal human capability and both are happy to bend the rules that govern our universe to allow us to do or see things we otherwise wouldn't. Why is it, then, that Superhero games are universally rubbish? There's an exception to every rule of course, but the Batman: Arkham games aside, there are a distinct lack of good superhero games. We ask why that is...





We feel like we should be excited when a superhero game is announced, not groaning.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MONEY



Every time someone mentions the PS3 adaptation of *Iron Man*, we feel a bit sick in the stomach.

The truth is that the motivation behind making many superhero games is as a cash-in. There have been a whole bunch of *Spider-Man* games, *X-Men* games and the like, that were released to tie-in with a movie in the hope that companies could make some easy money. After forking out cash for the licence to make tie-in games, the last thing publishers want is to spend a boatload more on developing the title. They want something done as quickly and cheaply as possible to coincide with a film's release in order to rake in some easy cash. As much as the developers making the game might like to take the time they need to make something that's *actually* worth playing, they're very unlikely to get the time and support they need to do that when making a quick buck is the motivation behind making the game in the first place. It's hardly surprising that games made in that fashion tend to be a bit crap.



WHAT BETTER EXAMPLES OF CYNICAL CASH-INS ARE THERE THAN THE AWFUL *CATWOMAN* TIE-IN WITH THE EQUALLY TOILET 2004 FILM...



...THE DREADFUL *THOR: GOD OF THUNDER* RELEASED IN 2011 ALONG WITH THE *THOR* FILM...



... AND PS ONE DUD *SPAWN: THE ETERNAL* WHICH, YOU GUESSED IT, WAS RELEASED THE SAME YEAR AS THE SPAWN FILM IN NORTH AMERICA.



"SUPERMAN, HULK AND IRON MAN CAN'T REALLY BE CONFINED IN A WAY THAT MAKES ANY SENSE"



It goes against the point of The Hulk when you have a game where Hulk can't smash *everything*.

SUPERHEROES ARE TOO POWERFUL

It might sound odd to say, but one of the biggest problems with developing a superhero game is that superheroes are just too damn powerful. When you're playing as the almighty Superman, the domineering Hulk or the near-indestructible Iron Man, how are you supposed to make players feel vulnerable? In fact, why should you? Superman *isn't* vulnerable, so what do you do? You create a *Superman* game where Superman is easily harmed, completely missing the point of Superman or you make a game



in which there's hardly any challenge. Neither sounds great. The other issue is that the likes of Superman, Hulk and Iron Man can't really be confined in a way that makes any sense. Hulk can smash through walls whenever he wants, Iron Man can fly around the world and Superman can fly to *other* worlds whenever he pleases. Videogames, on the other hand, can't let us do that. They have to confine us to limitations that those superheroes shouldn't have.



THE HEROES WE DESERVE

THE NEXT-GEN SUPERHERO GAMES WE WANT & THE DEVELOPERS WE WANT TO MAKE THEM

SANDMAN
TELLTALE

The titular Sandman can be both cruel and kind, making him an ideal character for Telltale's choice-based narrative adventure games.



ORACLE
QUANTIC DREAM

We can well imagine a murder-mystery-style adventure starring Oracle, headed up by Quantic Dream's David Cage.



V FOR VENDETTA
ARKANE STUDIOS

A masked, knife-wielding assassin in a dystopic world? Surely this is a job for the minds behind the brilliant *Dishonored*?



OLD MAN LOGAN
ROCKSTAR

If we're not going to get *Red Dead Redemption 2*, we'd like the team's take on the Western-themed *Wolverine: Old Man Logan* instead.



SECRET SIX
HIDEO KOJIMA

Kojima needs something to do when he leaves Konami, so we suggest he turn his attention to an adaptation of DC's *Secret Six*.



THEY DON'T CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF THE HEROES

The best way of laying this one out is to pick out the one game that *has* managed to identify the elements that make a superhero appealing and transfer that into a videogame: the *Batman: Arkham* series. The reason those games work is because Rocksteady has thought carefully about what makes Batman who he is and how they could make us feel like The Bat when we get the controller in our hands. On the one hand, there's the combat that captures Batman's physical prowess. Then there are the sections that encapsulate Batman's use of shadow and fear as weapons that he can use to pick his foes off one by one. Batman's intellectual capabilities are also covered in detective-like sections and with puzzles set by The Riddler. Most superhero games just don't give that kind of thought to how they can make us *feel* like the hero we're playing as. The lesson here is to use the hero as the starting point to inform a game's design, not to slap on mechanics that might have worked well in other games and genres without any thought about if that fits with the hero's fiction.



The *Iron Man* franchise has the potential to spawn some awesome action games.



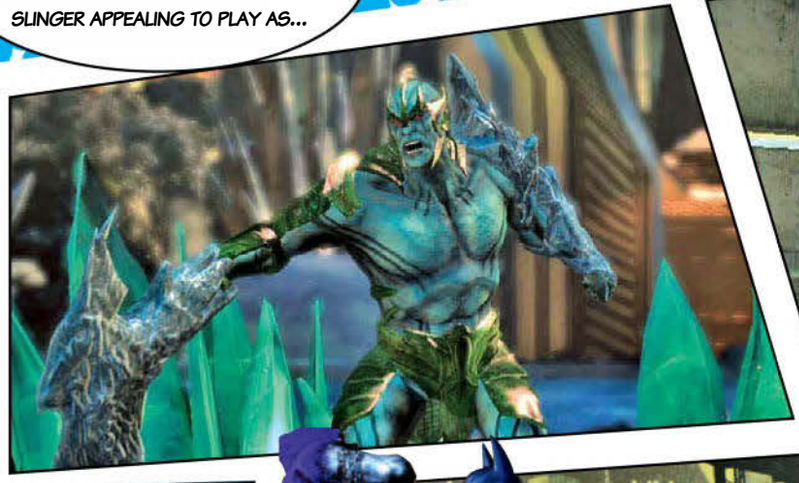
Spider-Man 2 is the only *Spider-Man* game that came close to capturing what made the web-slinger appealing to play as...



...then we had to deal with the likes of the terrible *Spider-Man 3* on PS3...



...and *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* on PS4, which tried to copy the Arkham games, rather than making a *Spider-Man* game.





MEANWHILE...



The *Batman: Arkham* series has established itself as the hero series we need and deserve.

"THE UGLY TRUTH IS THAT THE MOTIVATION BEHIND MAKING MANY SUPERHERO GAMES IS AS A CASH-IN"



GROUP TEST REMASTERS

With so many Definitive Editions and Remasters coming to PS4 lately, we decided to pit the latest batch against one another to see which offer best value for money...

THE GAME

How's the core game holding up?

DmC: Devil May Cry Definitive Edition



NINJA THEORY'S REBOOT of this action franchise didn't sit well with devout fans on release, leading to many of the changes evident in this revised version. With its interesting weapon switching system (where triggers act as modifiers to use Demon and Angel weapons) and superb bosses, it remains a cracking action game all the same, with loads of difficulty levels to work through in search of SSS ratings.

Toukiden Kiwami



WE'RE STILL WITHOUT a good old *Monster Hunter* game on a current PlayStation platform, but the imitators are ensuring that we have something to hunt in the meantime. *Toukiden* was one of the best clones of the bunch (and among the closest to Capcom's games, if you're looking for a replacement) and as is so often the case, this expanded version adds pretty much an entire new game's worth of new content.

Borderlands The Handsome Collection



THE SUGGESTION HERE is that the original *Borderlands* isn't handsome enough to make it onto this collection. We disagree – it's certainly a better game than *The Pre-Sequel* – but the fact that it ran on a different engine would have made it difficult to port over. Still, presented here are one of the best loot-drop FPS games ever made, and *The Pre-Sequel*. With loads of DLC included for both, there's *loads* to do here...

Dark Souls II Scholar Of The First Sin



FAIR PLAY TO Namco for spotting that *Bloodborne*-mania was going to shift a few PS4s, and for getting an enhanced version of *DSII* out to complement it. It's oddly easy after *Bloodborne*, at least in the opening few hours – the changes to enemy placement and such that come up as the game goes on are just plain rude, but you can't play a *Souls* game without expecting to die. That's sort of the point, after all.

THE PORT

Which games scrub up best on new hardware?

DmC: Devil May Cry Definitive Edition



BOTH RESOLUTION AND frame-rate have been given a major kick up the ass – *DmC* now runs at 1080p and 60fps with little in the way of disruption to this fluidity. It does serve to highlight some of the weaker geometry and design at times, but Ninja Theory's excellent art direction is usually enough to smooth over any cracks that present themselves. A solid performer, then, and a clear step up from last generation.

Toukiden Kiwami



KIWAMI LOOKS DAMN good considering it's basically a port of a Vita game. Character models aren't nearly up there with front-runners like *inFamous* and *The Order*, sure, but that's not the point – it's a hunting game so all that really matters are the big bad beasties you're tasked with dropping, and they look great. It's a game about content rather than visuals, but Koei Tecmo hasn't done bad at all with getting it up to snuff.

Borderlands The Handsome Collection



GIANT EXPLOSIONS OF colours and numbers could frequently bring the PS3 versions to a standstill, so it's impressive that these are now the only times you'll really notice the frame-rate drop off – it does happen elsewhere too, but to a lesser degree and way less often than it used to. It also renders some areas of *The Pre-Sequel* actually playable rather than just being slideshows, which is nice. There's still pop-in *everywhere*, mind.

Dark Souls II Scholar Of The First Sin

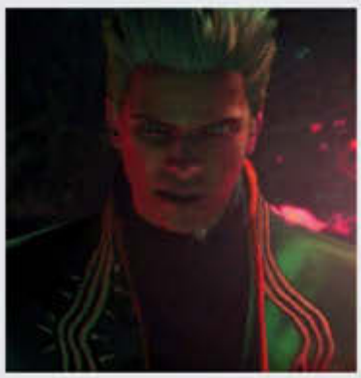


IT'S STILL NO looker but enhanced resolution and frame-rate do well to help make *Scholar* at least presentable. The leap to 60fps will come as something of a shock to those who endured the technical mess that was the original game's Blighttown on PS3, and it takes some getting used to. Those still reeling from the oppressive nature of *Bloodborne* can at least chill out in a newly beautiful Majula for a bit, too.

EXTRAS

What's new for the remastered versions?

DmC: Devil May Cry Definitive Edition



THE COSMETIC STUFF (skins, etc.) and Vergil story DLC are included, the latter enhanced to allow him access to the Bloody Palace survival mode as well. It's all about the new stuff here, though, such as Hardcore Mode (a modifier that can be enabled on any difficulty to massively alter gameplay and bring it in line with classic *DMC* games), Turbo Mode (same deal – use both, seriously) and some crazy new difficulty levels.

Toukiden Kiwami



AS WITH THE *G* versions of *Monster Hunter* games and *Soul Sacrifice Delta*, there's probably an entire game's worth of new content here. New NPC allies and weapon types are certainly welcome, but it's the new bosses that mean most on a gameplay level. There's a new system that can procedurally generate missions (as in *SSD*) too, meaning that you need never exhaust the crazy amount of content.

Borderlands The Handsome Collection



SO YOU GET *all* of *Borderlands 2*'s DLC (so some of the best expansion content ever created, then) and everything so far for *The Pre-Sequel* as well. All that extra content would cost the asking price for the PS3 versions alone, so it's a pretty darn good deal. A lot of it is cosmetic stuff or goofy seasonal missions, sure, but *Assault On Dragon Keep* is one of the best pieces of DLC we've ever played, so it sort of balances out.

Dark Souls II Scholar Of The First Sin



YOU GET THE three DLC packs from the PS3 version – which actually turned out to offer some of the most interesting enemies and areas in the whole game – plus a new NPC and a new final boss, a fair response to all those who complained about the previous last boss being a letdown. As with *Borderlands*, it doesn't really flag up DLC areas as being optional, and they're *hard* – you'll see what we mean when you stumble into one.

CHANGES

What's going on under the hood?

DmC: Devil May Cry Definitive Edition



HAVING HARDCORE AND Turbo modes as modifiers is an interesting approach, as it allows those who really enjoyed the original to relive it as it was and those who didn't to try it again, rebalanced and closer to legacy *DMC* games. Some of the later difficulty modes take this even further – Must Style, for instance, forces you to get up to a combat rating of S before you can damage enemies. Yeah, good luck with that.

Toukiden Kiwami



KIWAMI SEEMS MORE about additions than changes. The core game was already tight enough, so it's unlikely that anyone without hundreds of hours racked up on Vita will notice any glaring changes to core gameplay. That said, the new weapons and Mitama certainly offer new play styles that change up your approach, so they're where it's at if you're looking for a different experience to the Vita original.

Borderlands The Handsome Collection



IT MUST BE said that not a lot has changed here. The only major addition is that of four-player split screen play – last-gen versions were locked at two, so it's great that sociable sorts can now kick back on the sofa together to smack up a few raid bosses in company, assuming your TV offers enough space to accommodate four screens. It does load a fair bit quicker too, noticeably after dying, which is handy.

Dark Souls II Scholar Of The First Sin



WHERE DO WE even start? With the first hour, veterans will have spotted myriad changes that range from little things like item placement to giant new enemies that just sit in the middle of larger crowds that stand in your way. Increased numbers make it harder to run, but tougher supporting enemies make standing your ground and hacking through just as hard, if not worse. So yeah, it's a lot harder now. Somehow...

ONLINE

Have multiplayer and connectivity been improved?

DmC: Devil May Cry Definitive Edition



THERE'S NO ONLINE multiplayer here, so it all comes down to those online leaderboards. Breaking up the player base by making Hardcore mode a toggle option means there are twice as many leaderboards and therefore half as much action on each, which isn't exactly ideal. Still, it's nice to see how you stack up against the rest of the world, even if it usually ends up looking a lot more favourable than it probably is.

Toukiden Kiwami



IT WAS KINDA hard to find a lobby of your level after the first few weeks in the Vita version, but cross-play support across the PS4 and Vita versions here should help extend that lifespan somewhat. As before, you can go off hunting with up to three other players, and multiplayer modes and options seem to be a little better signposted than before. Which is good, because online is the best way to play and the more, the merrier.

Borderlands The Handsome Collection



FOUR-WAY SPLIT-SCREEN ISN'T going to matter to enough people to seriously impact on the online scene, though we wouldn't be surprised to see The *Pre-Sequel* gets more of a community than *B2* online – lots of people held off in case it came to PS4 and sure enough, here it is. DLC raid bosses and Digistruct Peak are designed with co-op in mind, so hopefully plenty of *B2* players will make the jump too as prices fall.

Dark Souls II Scholar Of The First Sin



WITH THE MAXIMUM number of players in one session growing from four to six, the potential for ganking just went through the roof. Expect some crazy showdowns in the two bell towers, and you just know the classic PvP hotspots (the Iron Keep bridge and the arenas) are going to be bustling for some time. You might want to steer clear of Grave Of Saints and Doors Of Pharros, too. Why? Oh, no reason...no reason at all...

THE VERDICT

Which remaster comes out on top?

DmC: Devil May Cry Definitive Edition



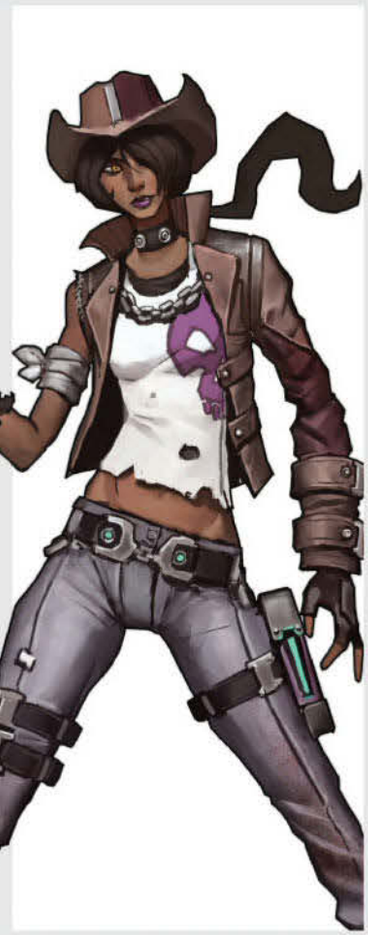
THERE'S AN ARGUMENT to be made for this being the least deserving candidate for a PS4 update of the games featured here, but that's coming from people who played and enjoyed the original game. For those who weren't so taken with it (or never played it, for that matter), the amount of options for how you play, while a little confusing, make it undeniably the best version of the game you can throw your money at. With all the modifiers, the difficulty ramped up and one of the classic costumes on, there's a good chance that the purists who wrote off *DmC* on account of it not being a 'proper' *Devil May Cry* game will come around to it, at least a little. There's enough here to warrant a return when the price is right for you, and this is one definitive edition whose name is certainly justified – ironic, since it was basically the game's name that caused such a stink in the first place.

Toukiden Kiwami



HAVING STARTED LIFE as a Vita exclusive, it's pretty likely that the majority of you have never even heard of it, let alone played the damn thing. Well we're here to tell you that you should, especially if you've ever played and enjoyed a *Monster Hunter* game. This is the closest thing available to us right now, but it does just enough to feel like more than just a straight clone – as with *Soul Sacrifice*, it's more about the actual showdown than the hunt, and this added battle time (rather than chasing monster around the map) lets you really get into the flow of combat once you master your chosen weapon. Teaming up with friends online makes it even better, especially since you end up blasting through the easier missions that much quicker in order to find something that presents both a real challenge for you and your group and the promise of some of that tasty loot at the end of it all.

Borderlands The Handsome Collection



THE COLOURFUL ART style of *Borderlands* means this is perhaps the best-looking of the bunch, even if the fact that *Borderlands 2* is that older than the rest does mean that a lot of people will have already played it. Still, the ability to carry over saves from the PS3 and Vita versions is welcome, giving even veterans a few reasons to upgrade – few people will have tackled *all* of the DLC beyond just the season pass stuff, after all. *The Pre-Sequel*, while not as good a game, is a nice addition and offers more potential for loot hunting once you're done with *B2*'s vast amount of content. You're getting a hell of a lot of game for your money here (as is also the case with *DSII* and *Toukiden*, to be fair) and assuming you're not already burned out on *Borderlands* – which could be the case, with B2's community still active today after nearly three years – the definitive version of *B2* alone makes this a pretty easy recommendation.

Dark Souls II Scholar Of The First Sin



WE'LL BE HONEST – it's not easy to go back to *Dark Souls II* after having been spoiled by *Bloodborne*. Miyazaki's new game is better in almost every way than the game other members of his team worked on while he was busy creating Yharnam and although it's still a good game, it's fair to say that this is still the weakest *Souls* games. DLC helps bump it up the rankings a bit – several of the optional areas are among the best in the whole game – but we're still not convinced by the new enemy placement. A lot of changes seem to arbitrarily boost difficulty where there was a tidy progression before, although plentiful and tougher foes means that you'll find yourself levelling up quicker. On a technical level, it's the best version of the game on console. But gameplay-wise, it feels a bit like difficulty is more important than design to the team, which we're hoping can be reined in for future *Souls* games.



★★★★★ TEN OF THE BEST ★★★★★

SPIN-OFFS

WHEN A GAME PROVES TO BE SUCCESSFUL, IT'S LIKELY THAT IT WILL GET A SPIN-OFF. IT MAY REEK OF 'CASH-IN', BUT THERE ARE SOME GREAT SPIN-OFFS OUT THERE...



RESIDENT EVIL: THE DARKSIDE CHRONICLES

PRIMARILY RETELLING THE events of *Resident Evil 2* and *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*, *The Darkside Chronicles* places you back in the shoes of Leon S. Kennedy and Claire Redfield. Unlike the games that it is based on, however, *Darkside Chronicles* is an on-rails shooter in the mould of *The House Of The Dead*. Okay, so a rail shooter *Resident Evil* spin-off sounds like a terrible idea, but *Darkside Chronicles* is a decent game. It's got local co-op multiplayer too.



KILLZONE: LIBERATION

YOU'LL NO DOUBT be familiar with *Killzone* as a series of first-person shooters, the most recent release being *Killzone Shadow Fall* on PS4. But, did you know that *Killzone* also had an isometric spin-off game in the form of *Killzone: Liberation* on PSP? It was still about shooting people with big guns, of course, just from a different perspective. In fairness, the game did have a couple of elements that changed things up a bit, from piloting vehicles, through to the ability to order teammates about.



SKYLANDERS

THIS IS ONE of only two game series on our list that can claim to be bigger than the series of which it is a spin-off. In fact, we wouldn't be surprised if a lot of *Skylanders* fans didn't even realise that it started off as a spin-off of another series. Yes, it was Spyro that kickstarted *Skylanders* with *Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure*. From there, *Skylanders* has become a behemoth that's bigger than any of Spyro's original games ever were.



DISSIDIA FINAL FANTASY

THE FINAL FANTASY series isn't shy on spin-offs, but the one we've picked out is *Dissidia Final Fantasy*. *Dissidia* is a mix of fighting game and action RPG. In respect to the latter, that means you can customise the equipment and earn experience points from each fight. If you're a lover of *Final Fantasy*, *Dissidia* is wonderful as it includes all the main protagonists and antagonists from the first ten *FF* games as playable characters.



CRASH TEAM RACING

IT'S BY FAR from the most famous PlayStation kart racer out there and we're by no means going to claim that it's the best. As *Mario Kart* rip-offs go, though – and let's be honest, that is what this is – *Crash Team Racing* on the original PlayStation was pretty damn good. It's got all the familiar mechanics you'll associate with the genre – speed-boosting powerslides, random power-ups and weapons and so on. It may not be as fondly remembered as the *Crash Bandicoot* games of which it is a spin-off, but *Crash Team Racing* certainly has plenty of fans, too.



METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE

RAIDEN MAY NOT be everyone's favourite *Metal Gear Solid* character (we think he's alright, give the guy a break) but he does have his own spin-off game. *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* is an action game in the mould of *Bayonetta* and *Devil May Cry*, requiring a great deal of technical skill and the mastering of its parry mechanic for success. Seeing as he's a sword-wielding cyborg ninja, Raiden has a 'Zandatsu' ability that lets you direct sword slices in order to cut your opponents in to pieces with a view to feasting on their sweet, sweet, health-restoring power cores. Mmmmmm... power cores.



THE PERSONA SERIES

WE SAID THAT *Skylanders* was one game on our list that can make a claim to be bigger than the series it was spun off of; the *Persona* series is another. Originally released as a spin-off of JRPG series, *Megami Tensei*, *Persona* has spawned four mainline releases, with the fifth on its way to PS4 in late 2015/early 2016. With their unique blend of JRPG dungeon crawling and social simulation, the *Persona* games have gained themselves a loyal following. More than that, though, they've been successful enough that this spin-off series has got spin-offs of its own, such as *Persona 4: Arena* and *Persona 4: Dancing All Night*.



LARA CROFT AND THE GUARDIAN OF LIGHT

A MIX OF isometric twin-stick shooting, puzzle solving and platforming, the core elements of *Tomb Raider* are clearly there in *Guardian Of Light*, despite the fact that the game's perspective makes it feel like a different game. The real difference with *Guardian Of Light* though, is its focus on co-op gameplay. When playing it together with a friend, you've got to use the characters' different abilities in tandem in order to progress.



METAL GEAR ACID

THE STAR OF *Metal Gear Solid*, Solid Snake, got himself a PSP spin-off in the form of *Metal Gear Acid*, a turn-based card game in which you are able to customise a deck of cards, each with different abilities and costs, then take them into levels and unleash them in a strategic plan to come out on top in each round. As you'd expect, the cards are *Metal Gear* themed, including weapons from the series and iconic characters like Revolver Ocelot, Gray Fox and Raiden.



DEAD SPACE: EXTRACTION

JUST AS YOU wouldn't have thought a *Resident Evil* rail shooter would work, the same goes for the rail shooting spin-off of horror series *Dead Space*. On the contrary, *Dead Space: Extraction* doesn't just 'work', it's actually good. A prequel to the original *game* that was included with the limited edition of *Dead Space 2* and released on the PlayStation Store, the game follows four characters as they deal with psychotic colonists and rabid Necromorphs.

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Bloodborne

A beast of an exclusive



PUBLISHER
Sony

DEVELOPER
From Software

PSN PRICE
£49.99

PLAYERS
1-4

AGE RATING
18+

TWITTER
@Bloodborne_PS4

Trophies 34

1 6 7 20

PS4

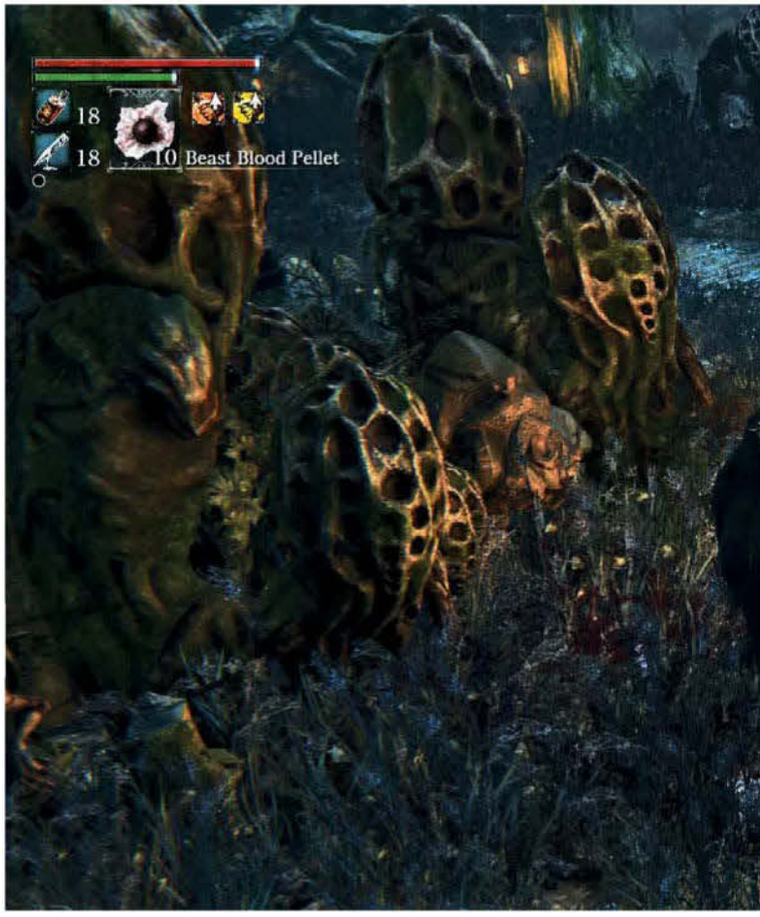
THERE ARE A lot of words that can be used to describe *Bloodborne*, but 'fun' sure as hell isn't one of them. That's the best thing about modern gaming, really – gone are the days when the only gaming options ran on coins and wowed crowds by moving a few coloured boxes around, and games have evolved and found new ways to entertain. Some eschew traditional gameplay in order to tell involving stories, others hark back to those golden early years and have us banging our heads against leaderboards for months and more still serve little purpose beyond filling downtime with brief bursts of colourful entertainment. That's not From Software's style, though. This is a team that wants you to suffer, wants you to die, and a team that wants you to really push the limits of your abilities. And when you finally manage to overcome one of the many, *many* obstacles the team has laid out for this revolting obstacle course, you'll discover something even better than fun – you'll discover the thrill of pure satisfaction, and it will make all the abject horror seem worth it.

Bloodborne's grim tone and setting really cannot be made light of or downplayed. It's aggressively oppressive, to the point where we actually found ourselves having to take breaks from playing, like it says to do in those funny jokes that developers like to put in game manuals. It can be hard to muster the mental strength to return to something so bleak, especially after ending a session with a few consecutive deaths in the same place. But you have no choice, really. As in the *Souls* games, all of your currency – Blood Echoes in this case, used for levelling up and general shopping – drops where you died, forcing you to face your fears and return to the scene of your own murder to retrieve the stash or lose it forever. In a particularly cruel twist, one of the nearby enemies (usually the one that killed you) might devour your dropped Echoes, meaning you have to kill it next time to get them back. The glowing eyes make it easy to see which is the culprit, but the added pressure turns these encounters into mini boss battles of sorts, often with a tidy sum on the line.

The reason we say that is because this isn't like *Dark Souls II* – you can't just expect to find bonfires spaced generously throughout Yharnam. It's not that kind of place, man. The lamps, which serve the same purpose as *DS* bonfires in as much as that they're checkpoints and fast travel beacons, are far fewer. Instead, From uses



△○×□ There's not a huge difference in the stats between armour sets, so just wear whatever looks the fanciest.



△○×□ It's usually spiders that gross people out in RPGs. Here, if you don't like snakes, you're screwed.

some ingenious level design to place the emphasis on unlocking shortcuts and new routes to and from existing lanterns. It all just adds to the sensation of helplessness and futility brewed by the general atmosphere of the game – many times, you'll make great progress only to find that even if you do make it, all you've done is unlocked a door back to where you started. Well, we say 'all you've done', but this seemingly menial task is actually the cause of some of *Bloodborne*'s most euphoric moments, letting you return to the hub area to bank your Echoes (via consumerism and self-improvement – there's no actual bank) and then get back to where you previously were in a fraction of the time and with way less horrible beasties in your way. You'll praise the hell out of the sun when you find one of these routes, not that that's even a thing anymore. There's no sun *to* praise. That's how bleak *Bloodborne* is. It's never even bloody daytime in Yharnham.

Combat has evolved a good deal from the *Souls* games and while similarities still exist, the most notable alteration is the new focus on speed and aggression. Patient players could hide behind shields and pick their moment in *Dark Souls*, or keep a safe distance and abuse overpowered spells or cheap poison arrows to drop many foes, but that ain't gonna fly here. There *is* a shield in the game but it seems to exist purely as a cruel joke rather than to facilitate classic *Souls* sword-and-boarding – the emphasis here is on mobility and pace, the invulnerability window on dodging widened somewhat to make up for the fact that it is your only line of defence. Even the regain system, a new mechanic where recently lost health can be partially restored by spilling enemy blood, is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the extra healing is welcome when the right opening presents itself but on the other, it's a downright rude way to coax overeager players into putting themselves in harm's way. Learning when to counter-attack and when to cut your losses is a core skill to learn thanks to this, but it's still easy to get carried away and throw everything away even after hours and hours in Yharnam.

That's how long it will take, too. While it *can* be speed-run, the labyrinthine layout and numerous optional bosses and areas mean that it's easy to get lost for hours in places that technically don't even matter. Well, unless you've permanently got a Wiki open in a browser window while playing, in which case, congratulations on ruining your experience – save that shit for subsequent runs. The thrill of discovery and joy of sharing stories and experiences with fellow players who may have done things differently is such a key part of the *Souls* experience,



OR YOU COULD TRY △ **DARK SOULS II: SCHOLAR OF THE FIRST SIN** Another brutally hard From Software game, this upgraded port looks and runs better than its PS3 counterpart. Oh, and it's harder, too.





△○×□ Chalice dungeons often house sweet loot, especially the randomised Root variants.



△○×□ One of just many 'what the hell even is that thing?' moments in the game...

and *Bloodborne* is no different in that respect. This advice might arrive a little late for you (you know for next time now, though) but if you haven't started it yet, do yourself a favour and do your first run blind. The more you know, the less impact it has and it's borderline criminal to scupper the great work From has done by spoiling yourself. There's so much mystery to every aspect of the game that it's only natural to want to discover as much as possible, but do not underestimate the sheer elation of getting through with minimal help.

That said, a similar summoning system to the *Souls* games still exists in case you hit a wall with a particular boss and while using that is unlikely to harm your enjoyment as much as using guides, you should know that even this mechanic – one designed to offer a helping hand, no less – can be fraught with danger. Ringing a bell to summon help can also alert potential invaders to your location, allowing them to join your session as hostiles. Given that you can only be invaded before the area boss is defeated, we fully expect many sadistic intruders to set up shop in the streets and alleys leading up to the trickier bosses, as they'll find most fresh meat that way. Thankfully, though, you're finally able to set up a password for matchmaking, meaning you can summon people you know as long as they are within the range of your level (the permitted distance between characters being ten plus ten per cent of your current level, as is the case with *Dark Souls*). Might make things easier, or it could just give skilled invaders two scalps for the price of one.

Co-op and PvP are both also possible in the new Chalice Dungeons, sprawling tombs that exists beneath Yharnam and soon come to present some of the game's stiffest challenges. Rather than scaling with your current game cycle (an early Chalice will be the same difficulty on a first run as on NG++), these have their own grading via the Depth stat. Clear a dungeon and you'll usually unlock a new Chalice that lets you create a randomly generated variant, where all sorts of horrible things can happen. Story bosses might show up in different settings (or there are a slew of bespoke Chalice-only bosses to face if not), weapons and gems can be found if you get lucky and it's a way of offering long-term endgame play with random encounters and rewards. Just as well too, since New Game+ offers little beyond a greatly increased level of difficulty – no new items, encounters or story stuff (well, that we know of yet – the community is still working the game out) mean NG+ is purely a place for veterans to show off skills and Chalice Dungeons are the real endgame here.

Bloodborne is a horrible game, and one where everything and everyone is bleeding, crying, screaming, cackling, dying, or doing some/all of those things in some grim combination. The Lovecraftian lore and pseudo-Victorian setting are incredible, as is the way in which From has stepped up its game dramatically for its PS4 debut, but it's just not nice. And it isn't supposed to be. This is a game that psyches players out within mere minutes and revels in their fear, desperation and misery, and naturally, that's not going to be for everyone. But when you come to learn the air-punching, controller-throwing satisfaction of felling a boss that has murdered you more times than you care to remember, you'll get it. From Software is a studio that has mastered the fine balance of challenge and reward, and there's an argument to be made for this being its finest effort yet. Fear the old blood? Whatever. We fear the new blood. It's far more terrifying.

Luke Albigés

"THERE'S NOT EVEN A SUN TO PRAISE. THAT'S HOW BLEAK BLOODBORNE IS. IT'S NEVER EVEN BLOODY DAYTIME."

VERDICT

The hype is real – From Software did not disappoint. *Bloodborne* is amazing, and easily the best triple-A exclusive on PS4 so far. Come have a horrible time in Yharnam with us.

92%



Battlefield Hardline

Better than The Bill?



PS4

ALSO ON PS3

YOU KNOW IT, we know it, Visceral knows it, EA knows it: *Battlefield* is renowned for its exceptional multiplayer and that's precisely what everyone is looking for whenever a new entry comes along. In some respects, Visceral's first stab at a *Battlefield* game struggles to live up to that legacy. You expect to develop an affection for a couple of maps in the early going, anticipate that one or two will shine in certain modes, but, alas, that doesn't really happen. There's even an argument to be made that the game's maps don't work particularly well in *Battlefield*'s trademark mode, Conquest. Control points often feel unimaginatively placed, and too many of the maps are uncharacteristically cramped, to the effect that the traditional strategic bent of the mode is nixed somewhat and the flow of matches suffers. Don't get us wrong, *Hardline*'s map design is far from terrible, nor are we suggesting that Conquest isn't any fun to play. Rather, we are saying that the mode doesn't quite match up when compared to previous entries. It can offer moments of brilliance, but they're much rarer than they used to be.

Fortunately, while *Hardline* might struggle when it comes to Visceral trying to ape what DICE does best, there's a spectacular reversal when it takes things in a new direction. That's most notable in the brilliant Hotwire mode. Hotwire is a bit like Conquest mixed with the *Speed* films – each control point is a vehicle that remains in your team's control only as long as you keep it up to speed. This leads to some exhilarating battles as you bomb around the map in cars, hanging out of windows, lobbing grenades and spraying gunfire at enemies who are doing the same, in a bid to take out their mobile control point so that it respawns on the map and sparks yet another mad dash to grab it for your team. *Hardline* may struggle at times to leverage its cops and robbers set-up in a meaningful way, but during those intense car chases, you really do get an action movie feel.

> "THAT'S A BIT LIKE SAYING BEING KICKED IN THE SHINS IS BETTER THAN BEING PUNCHED IN THE FACE"

Speaking of *Hardline*'s attempts to make the game's cops and robbers theme count, there are times when this both helps and hinders the game. The aforementioned Hotwire and Heist – a mode in which crims have to break into a vault and then get its contents to an escape point – are examples of the former. However, the decision to split upgrades and inventories between the two factions in order to differentiate them ends up feeling arbitrary and frustrating. Add the fact that unlocking new weapons and attachments requires a combination of ranking up your character, meeting particular requirements with your weapons and earning cash and the whole system becomes unnecessarily convoluted. In and of itself, it's not a big deal, but it is emblematic of *Hardline*'s uneven success in finding its own identity whilst also remaining a '*Battlefield* game'.

That's also the case the game's single-player campaign, which takes episodic



DETAILS

PUBLISHER EA
DEVELOPER Visceral Games
PSN PRICE £54.99
PLAYERS 1-64
INSTALL SIZE 44.2 GB
AGE RATING 18+
TWITTER @Battlefield

Trophies 41

1 3 14 23

IN THIS SERIES

BATTLEFIELD 4 If you're not a fan of the series, you wont be wooed by *Hardline*. For devoted fans, though, there's enough here make it worthwhile.





△○×□ Explosions are good, but a good *Battlefield* player will never prioritise them at the expense of an objective.

TV as its influence. The storytelling is certainly better than in previous entries, though you could argue that's a bit like saying being kicked in the shins is better than being punched in the face. There are some decent moments in *Hardline*'s story, but those positives are tempered by its tendency to fall back on clichés. It's also notable that *Hardline* is careful to avoid saying anything of value about the police force at a time where police conduct has been brought into focus in the US. There's also little, if any, attention paid to police brutality, racism or police militarization. The police don't come off favourably by the end of the game, but *Hardline*'s tale of corruption unmistakably treads on safer, more well worn ground.

To return to our starting point, though, it's multiplayer that really matters. When it comes to many of the aspects for which DICE's *Battlefield* games have been praised, *Hardline* performs little more than a imitation. However, new modes like Hotwire, Heist and Blood Money elevate it to being far more than an inferior copy of what's come before. If you're here for the multiplayer, as we suspect you are, then you're still likely to have plenty of fun.

Paul Walker-Emig

VERDICT

A passable and unspectacular campaign is unlikely to win any new fans, but *Hardline*'s fresh take on *Battlefield* multiplayer makes it worth a shot.

70%





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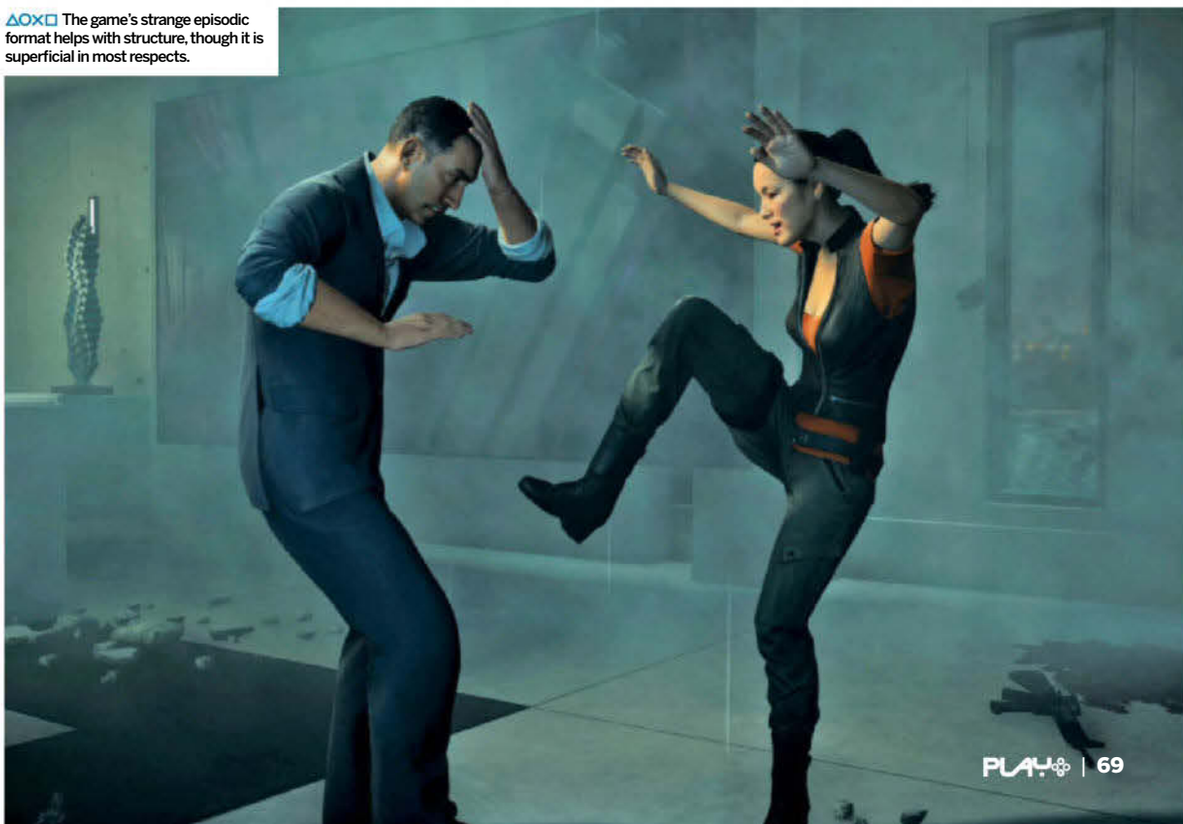
△○×□ Those vehicles are just begging for a well-aimed grenade shot.

THE PERFECT SHOT

Launching the grenade of your life

When playing Hotwire, there's nothing as satisfying as arcing a grenade shot into the path of an enemy vehicle and seeing it explode into a ball of flames, taking out a checkpoint and grabbing a multi-kill in the process. Slap that Share button!

△○×□ The game's strange episodic format helps with structure, though it is superficial in most respects.





Resident Evil Revelations 2

Barry deserves better



DETAILS

PUBLISHER Capcom

DEVELOPER In-house

PSN PRICE £19.99

PLAYERS 1

INSTALL SIZE 6.6 GB

AGE RATING 18+

TWITTER @RE_Games

Trophies 44

1 4 7 32

PS4

ALSO ON PS3 & VITA

THE FURTHER YOU get in *Resident Evil: Revelations 2* the more serious the narrative attempts to be. It's a poor design decision and one that ultimately undermines the 'traditional' survival horror sensibilities that Capcom has attempted here. The rigid game mechanics that strive so doggedly to revive the spirit of the series' earlier years simply don't fit with a plot that forcefully throws Franz Kafka quotes at you. As a result, you've a game in which the interaction and the plot/characters feel like two entirely separate entities.

Split into four episodes, it's the early ones that work best. Here, the sloppy movements of the playable cast, the awkward shooting, and the numerous graphical bugs are forgivable thanks to a wafer thin story that relies on horror clichés to a charmingly humorous degree. Both the writing and the interaction feel like a much intended joke and so it's enjoyable to let yourself get pulled along by it all, basking in the nostalgia that *Revelations 2* is so often an expert in creating.

When the episodes start to get more serious, however, you realise that it isn't a well-intended joke at all. This is a game taking itself extremely seriously, and it's then that you begin to feel a sense of pity; that you're playing something that has been locked in a coma for 15 years and hasn't had the chance to see and understand how games have since evolved.

It's not that any element is broken or poorly conceived, it's more a case of the overall recipe being flawed. Rather than embrace the good of past and present game design, *Revelations 2* seems intent on stubbornly proving that there has no reason for design evolution at all, arguing that the ideas of yesteryear are equally viable today. It's a misstep that, by its finale, renders the campaign an uninspired mess. It is a befuddling symbol of how clinging to the past merely to spite the present is an exercise in futility, and one that will render you obsolete.

> "A BEFUDDLING SYMBOL OF HOW CLINGING TO THE PAST MERELY TO SPITE THE PRESENT IS AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY"

It's lucky, then, that it offers something other than its campaign. If it wasn't for Raid mode, it would be all too easy to consign the project to the scrap heap and remind *Resident Evil* that it's running out of chances to prove that it's still worth paying attention to. Alone, it's unlikely to be worth the price of admission on its own, but Raid mode does tap into the kind of underlying model that the main campaign would probably have benefitted from.

The core idea is to simply waste each and every enemy thrown at you within environments that are incredibly tightly controlled. Progression through different zones within the levels is granted only once you've killed enough enemies, encouraging an outright offensive approach that works with the mechanics offered here.

With movement and shooting adhering to the same old-school rules

OR YOU COULD TRY

THE EVIL WITHIN A far better proposition all-round, Shinji Mikami's classic harks back to the survival horror games of old and demonstrates how to incorporate old ideas into a new era.



△○×□ These guys can be tough to bring down and they hit pretty hard, too.





△○×□ Characterisation is uniformly weak throughout all four episodes, undermining any attempt at worthwhile narrative.

as the campaign, there's a palpable sense of nervous excitement as multiple enemies come bearing down on you. Kill them all before they reach you and you've guaranteed passage to the next arena. Let them get too close and all hell is going to break loose.

By taking away the sloppy narrative and feeble characters, *Revelations 2* is able to breathe and have fun by altering the rules and objectives typically associated with Nineties survival horror design. Ammo is usually plentiful, so the threat of death is directly linked with your ability to kill quickly rather than your sixth sense for staying fully stocked. By taking itself less seriously, the outdated design works in a way that invokes parody and satire. Whether that's the intention or not, the overall experience is pleasurable.

If *Revelations 2* had provided Raid mode as the primary feature within a package offered at a lower price point then giving it an enthusiastic thumbs-up would be a no-brainer. As it stands, though, the stilted and crude campaign lets it down. This is a clear case of the support act upstaging the headliner. Most obviously, though, it's a performance that further highlights *Resident Evil*'s continued inability to find its place within a fast-changing videogame landscape.

John Robertson

VERDICT

The bad pacing is partially forgiven thanks to Raid mode, but even that's not nearly enough to bring *Revelations 2* anywhere near the status of the survival horror greats.

66%

PLAY CHALLENGE



SHARE THESE FEATS, IF YOU CAN...



PISTOL ONLY

△ **COMPLETE AS MANY** Raid missions as you can using only a pistol. It's even possible to start without any firearms at all...



S RANK HERO

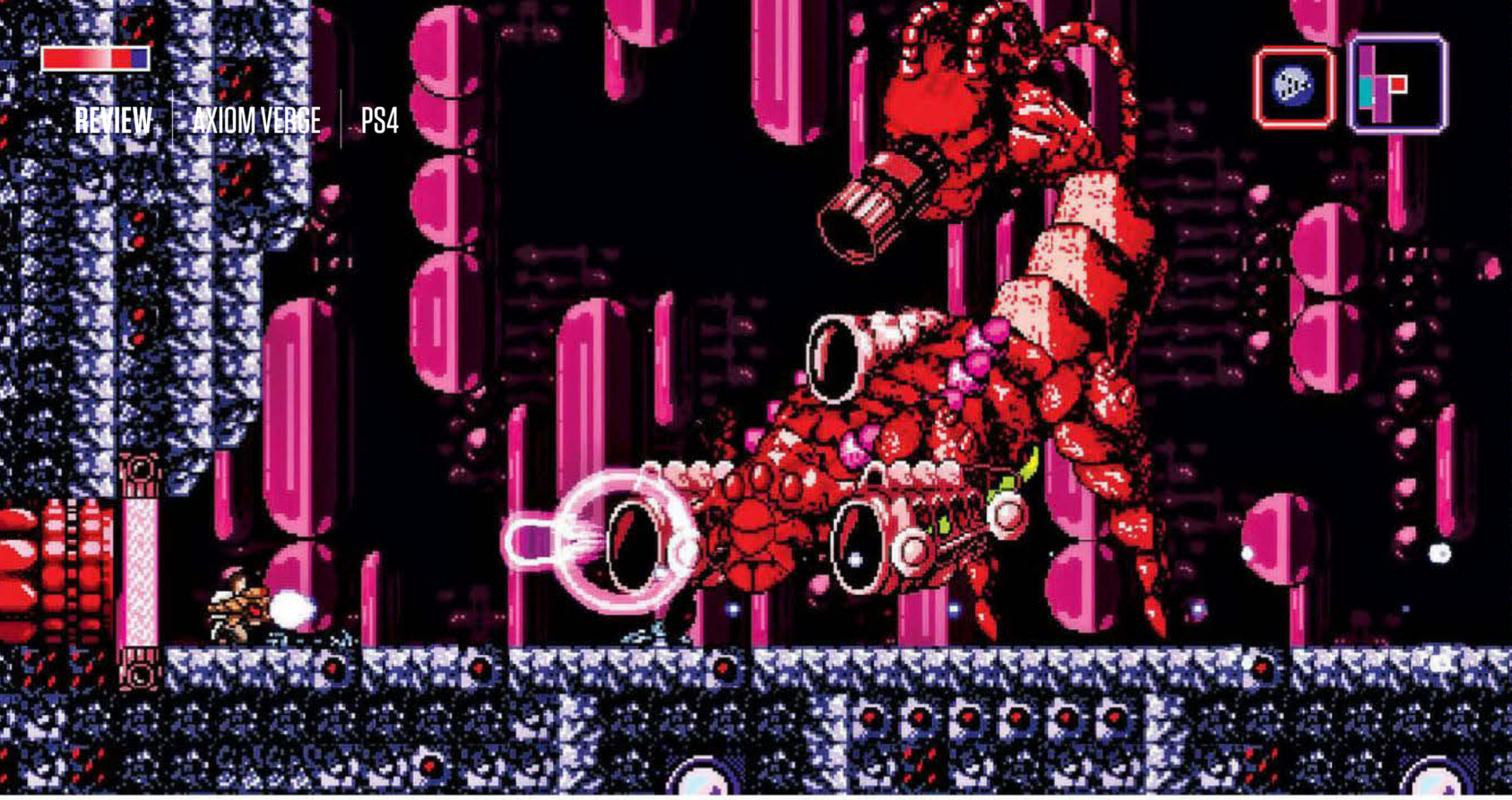
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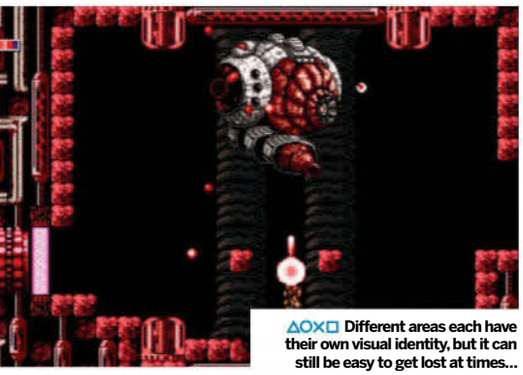












△○×□ Different areas each have their own visual identity, but it can still be easy to get lost at times...

Axiom Verge

Life's a glitch and then you die



PS4

ALSO ON VITA

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Thomas Happ Games

DEVELOPER
In House

PSN PRICE
£14.99

PLAYERS
1

AGE RATING
12

TWITTER
@AxiomVerge

Trophies 30

1 8 0 21

THE TERM 'METROIDVANIA' is chucked around a fair bit in the discussion of modern indie games, and with good reason – many pay tribute to both the Nintendo and Konami classics, after all. In this instance, though, you can pretty much do away with the '-vania' suffix. *Axiom Verge* is just a pure, old-school *Metroid* game in all but name, and we're absolutely fine with that.

That's not actually entirely fair on the one-man development 'team', since there's a lot of things you'll see and do over the course of the game that simply wouldn't have been possible in those old 8 and 16-bit games, visually, mechanically and just generally.

Actually, rewind a second... let's go back to the part where we said that *one guy* was responsible for everything in this game. Think about that the next time you're watching an hour-long Ubisoft staff roll – sure, this isn't some sprawling open-world epic (well, it sort of is, actually...) with super-detailed 1080p 3D visuals, but *Axiom Verge* has direction, coherent style and moderated progression, all things that are so much harder to nail with sub-teams working on every individual aspect of a large project. Happ has hammered home a key point that so many triple-A titans so often miss with this solo effort, and just as Miyazaki's influence is clear on *Bloodborne* and Kojima has made *Metal Gear* his own, the rest of the major players could learn a thing or two from this inconspicuous indie – coherency and vision count for a lot, even in today's big-budget world where larger teams are seemingly a necessity.

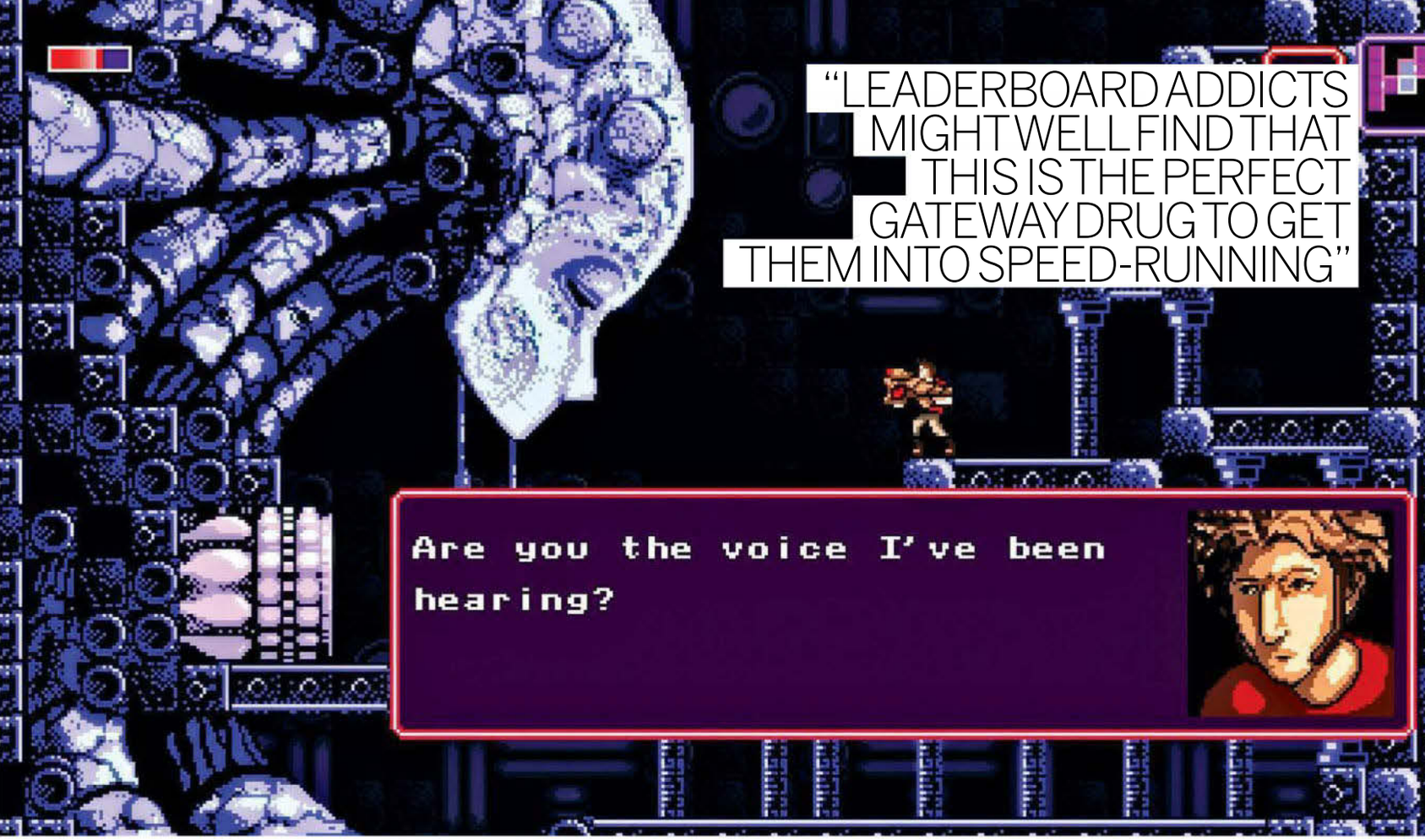
So while its 8-bit exterior might not tell you as much, *Axiom Verge* is a bloody smartly built game. The more you play, the more you come to realise that Happ has been willing to twist and break design staples for this kind of game as much as he has adhered to them. Like all great games of its ilk, it's cleverly designed to be something that can be explored at a leisurely pace and cleared in around 15 hours *and* blitzed through at top speed – there's a Trophy for doing it in under four hours, plus an entire mode devoted to speed-runs that does away with all dialogue, prompts and

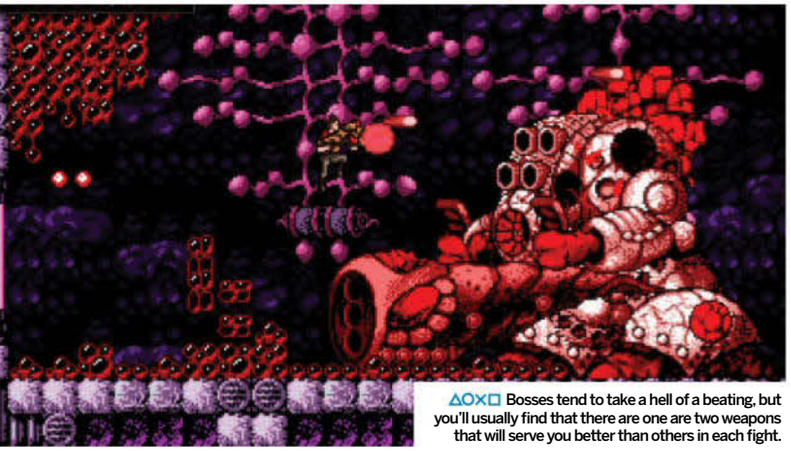
FOR FANS OF...

△ **CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT**
Like sprawling maps that you'll need to retread and revisit whenever you get a new ability? Then you'll love this.

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"LEADERBOARD ADDICTS MIGHT WELL FIND THAT THIS IS THE PERFECT GATEWAY DRUG TO GET THEM INTO SPEED-RUNNING"





△○×□ Bosses tend to take a hell of a beating, but you'll usually find that there are one are two weapons that will serve you better than others in each fight.

unnecessary extras, with a built-in timer to keep your stream viewers on the edge of their seats. While that's classic *Metroid* design (well, apart from the obvious nods to the Twitch generation), the closest modern analogue is the *Souls* series, where most players toil for weeks just to reach the credits while the elite can clock the games in under an hour. It's here that the game's value beyond the first run truly lies and while it's certainly worth playing even as a one-and-done kind of deal, leaderboard addicts might well find that this is the perfect gateway into speed-running.

It's tight enough mechanically, that's for sure. Again, like in the *Souls* games (that's another shot, if you're playing the Modern Games Journalism Drinking Game), we didn't die once where we saw fit to blame controllers or make other excuses. It was all on us, whether failing to judge things properly or accurately read enemy patterns. Many are the tools at your disposal, but we'd imagine anyone failing to make much progress isn't abusing one in particular quite enough. As well as guns, lasers and drills, you'll soon come to be the proud owner of your very own glitch beam, a weapon that can disrupt obstacles to make them passable but that can also be used on enemies to frazzle them and alter the way they function. Tiny foes can have their hit boxes increased in size; speedy enemies can be slowed to a near halt; lurkers can be sniffed out and debuffed before they've broken cover. It's a potent tool and one that you should look to abuse, if only to see what it actually does to each type of enemy. Any game that promotes this kind of experimentation is fine by us, especially since there are clear rewards for doing so.

In this graphics-obsessed age, it'd be easy to dismiss *Axiom Verge* as 'just another retro-style indie game', but to do so would be to do both game and creator a huge disservice. While it may be intentionally styled to look like a classic game, that makes it timeless – it'll still hold up in a decade or so when we're all shaking our heads at games like *The Order* and wondering how we ever thought they looked good, just like we do after every generation. That's the easy part, mind. The hard part is creating a game that pays homage to the greats yet still employs this timeless pixel art style to create a new experience, and that's a second tick for Happ and his tea... oh yeah, right... just for Happ. It'll keep you guessing on your first run – both in terms of where to go and what is actually going on – and yet still manages to hold up to repeat plays, even to the point where people will be one-upping each other for the fastest run for years to come. While it might not be the kind of game you bought a PS4 to play, it's one that perfectly highlights just how much most modern games still have left to learn from those of the past.

Luke Albigés

VERDICT

Stylish and superbly designed, *Axiom Verge* is the best *Metroid* game in years. Enjoy it while you can; we'd be amazed if Happ didn't end up at Nintendo after this solo debut.

87%

REVIEW ROUND-UP


B

5 STAR WRESTLING [A] bills itself as the "*Pro Evolution* of professional wrestling games". It is not. It is the *Chris Kamara Street Soccer* of professional wrestling games. It is to professional wrestling games what stepping in dog crap is to walking down the street. In other words, it's bad. That much became apparent to us within a couple of matches, during which time we had been treated to terrible animations, our characters constantly glitching through one another and an instance where one wrestler was propelled out of the arena, falling into a seemingly infinite blue void from which he could not return. The game prides itself on its flexible reversal system, but there's not compulsion to learn the intricacies of what the system might offer when the fundamentals feel so ropey. Even the joy of laughing at it with a friend is spoiled somewhat by the fact that you have to go to the trouble of undertaking challenges in order to earn the currency you need to unlock new match types. From the fact that there's no crowd in *5 Star Wrestling*, to the frequent glitches, you're struck by the sense that this game simply isn't finished.

What a pleasure it is to move onto something far more polished in the form of **LIFE IS STRANGE [B]** and its second installment, *Out Of Time*. We very much enjoyed the first episode of the game, but it's now becoming something far more sophisticated and interesting than we anticipated. We won't spoil anything about *Out Of Time* for you, but we will say that it takes a very dark turn and deals with a very difficult issue with tact and sensitivity. In doing so, it shows a welcome awareness of how vulnerable people may find themselves coming up against barriers when confronted by institutions that might be indifferent or sceptical to their plight and individuals whose influence might pervert the course of justice. That *Life Is Strange* manages to do all that within the confines of its indie-teen-movie tone – occasionally grating hipster dialogue and all – is as surprising as it is impressive. The aesthetics of the game are woven together with just as much skill as this episode's narrative turns. Visuals and audio frequently coalesce wonderfully to create moments of serenity that set the emotional tone and help with pacing. This is a world that's always bright and beautiful on the outside, but that juxtaposes that perfectly

"GAME OF THRONES MIGHT BE PROOF THAT TELLTALE IS LOSING ITS MAGIC, UNLESS IT CAN DO SOMETHING TO PULL US BACK IN"


A

△○×□ The roster in *5 Star Wrestling* is composed of thinly-veiled copies like Randy Orton rip-off, Andy Organ.





△○×□ Victoria is meant to be dislikable, but there's a hint that her character could be rounded out in the next episode.

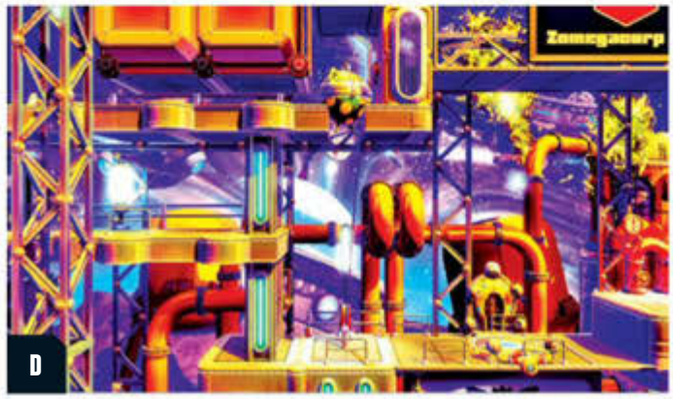
with an unmistakable aura of sadness. If it keeps going like this, then *Life Is Strange* will be essential.

If this is an episodic game that we've encouraged you to jump in on, let us do the opposite when it comes to **YORBIE [C]**, a game that we've christened the *5 Star Wrestling* of episodic games. In fairness to *Yorbie*, it doesn't have the glitches that *5 Star Wrestling* has, but to say that it functions on a basic level is about as much praise as we can offer. *Yorbie* is an excruciatingly dull shooter where you are tasked with dealing with robot enemies with buffoonish AI, collecting coins to upgrade your equipment and trying not to tear your headphones off in response to the game's infuriatingly annoying sound effects. It does support up to four-player co-op and, if you could persuade three other friends to join you, we're sure it would be a lot more fun. If you do this, however, be aware that your friends will probably never listen to you again.

Another game that would benefit from having someone else to play with is **SHIFTLINGS [D]**, a game that's clearly geared towards local co-op. If you're not going to be able to get a partner to join you, though, we still wouldn't necessarily write the game off, because it can be played solo and it's still fun. The title refers to the two little alien dudes you will be guiding through the game's levels. They are connected via a cord, through which you can force a gaseous cloud that will inflate one of the Shiftlings into a huge and heavy form. The smaller of the two is a more nimble jumper and can activate levers. The bigger one can use his weight to drag their buddy up ledges, activate pressure sensors or serve as a bouncy castle to launch their companion high into the air. This puzzler is all about shifting between those two states to navigate the game's environments. It can be frustrating now and again, but on the whole, it's a cool little puzzle game with some good ideas.



C



D

△○×□ Don't let *Shiftlings'* bright, colourful and cartoony art style lead you to think that the game doesn't get tricky...

It's arguable that episode three of **GAME OF THRONES [E]**, *The Sword In The Darkness*, displays evidence that this series is running a little short on ideas. For those of us who have played a couple of Telltale's games before, there is a sense that the choice based narrative formula is in danger of wearing thin. Our familiarity with how the games work starts to make it all too easy to see the strings being pulled behind the scenes and that takes you out of the experience. The sense that the game struggles with the number of characters it has continues from the last episode, the fact that you're constantly switching between them making it difficult to build a proper connection with each protagonist. Having said that, *Game Of Thrones* may be proof that Telltale is losing its magic, unless it does something to astound us in the next episodes. At some point, we think Telltale is going to have to shake its games up or risk them going stale. *The Sword In The Darkness* is evidence that they haven't reached that point yet, but the cracks may just be starting to show.

△○×□ *Game Of Thrones* is arguably proving more apt at making you hate its villains than it as at getting you to love its heroes.



E



PLAYSTATION CLASSICS #14

PUBLISHER EA | **DEVELOPER** VISCERAL GAMES | **FORMAT** PS3
RELEASE DATE 24 OCTOBER 2008 | **PLAY SCORE** 87% | **METACRITIC SCORE** 86/100

The Making Of... DEAD SPACE

Dead Space moved away from the clunky shooting and awkward controls of the traditional horror game and cemented itself as a classic. Dom Peppiatt returns to the USG Ishimura (the fool) to discover what made Dead Space so great...





△○×□ Both Ian Milham and Steve Papoutsis remember their work on *Dead Space* extremely fondly.



Before *Dead Space*, EA Redwood Shores was no stranger to developing licensed games. It wasn't as if the studio was bad at them – in fact, the opposite is true; its work on EA's licences remains some of the best the industry has seen – it was just ready for a change. It had been dealing with whatever EA would give it for a decade, and was ready to shift gear and prove to the world that it could do something new, something unique.

"We didn't have an identity, really," Steve Papoutsis tells us when we ask him how *Dead Space* came about, in the days before EA Redwood Shores became the now reputable Visceral Studios. "We had a variety of games to work on in different [properties]; from the *Bond* licence to the *Lord Of The Rings* licence, and we even worked on the *Tiger Woods* games for a few years."

It's fair to say EA Redwood Shores cut its teeth early – the studio had built an engine for the quietly successful *Godfather* game, building it to its own specification, making an engine that would satisfy its own creative vision. Over the ten years before Visceral, Papoutsis and his colleagues really got to know games. "People saw us as an EA studio, but we really wanted to establish ourselves as a *proper* studio."

And the best way to do that was to shock people, to surprise them so much that they had no choice but to sit up and listen. Enter *Dead Space* – last generation's leading survival horror franchise. The first game was a revelation – it took horror gaming to a place that gamers had never seen before: the gothic isolation of space.

"The thinking behind *Dead Space*'s setting was both technical and artistic," explains the game's art director, Ian Milham. "We wanted an ownable look, something that was very evocative, because we knew we were going to invest very heavily in constantly alive lighting, from

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△○×□ Most enemies have to be dispatched by targeting their limbs, targeting torsos generally was a bad idea.

a technical standpoint. As it turns out, ribs really show off shadows – when lights move across ribs, it creates this shadow pattern when and it crosses and it looks awesome. So that rusted, space gothic thing worked really well with what we wanted to do technically."

"WE WANTED OUR WORLD TO FEEL GROUNDED, TOO; SCI-FI HAS A TENANCY TO FEEL VERY ETHEREAL"

It was this insistence on putting the studio's old *Godfather* engine to use with a new high contrast lighting technique that would give *Dead Space* its unique look. Yes, it was dark, as all horror games are, but the strong flashes of light worked tremendously in giving jump scares that all-important punch – a flash of light and a Necromorph up in your face isn't something we have forgotten.

But it wasn't just a technical choice; the USG Ishimura, home to all of the game's events was just as much of a character as the game's protagonist, Isaac Clarke. You felt like you knew the ship intimately from the very moment you set foot in it. That was totally intentional.

"Gothic architecture and churches and that – they're all very readable, as architecture," Milham reveals. "You can see how they're all held up with buttresses and pillars and stuff. We wanted our world to feel very grounded, too; science fiction (especially *games* science fiction) has a tendency to feel very ethereal, like these ships wouldn't really work, couldn't really get built. We wanted something very grounded and real, so basing the ships on that kind of gothic architecture worked for us technically, aesthetically *and* tonally."

Just because the Ishimura was built to give you this sense of déjà vu (it felt like you could have been there

BLUFFER'S GUIDE

Everything you need to know in five facts



1 It's a survival-horror third-person shooter set aboard the deserted USG Ishimura ship.



2 It's loved for its tactical shooting, unique handling and extremely tense atmosphere.



3 It's the game that gave EA enough trust in its developers to let them have more freedom.



4 You play as Isaac Clarke, an engineer who's suffering from the onset of madness.



5 Without *Dead Space*, it's very likely we wouldn't have games like *Alien: Isolation*.



△○×□ While you could punch or stomp enemies, the general stratagem was to keep distance between you and the Necromorphs in order to preserve your health.





FURTHER READING

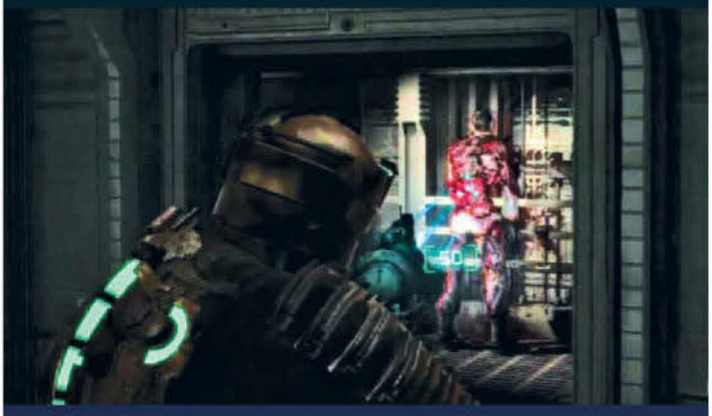


OLDER – BIOSHOCK (PS3)
You can easily compare Rapture and the Ishimura as settings for horror games – both are claustrophobic, teeming with unsettling life and galvanised with a solid, riveting plot.



NEWER – METRO: LAST LIGHT
Confined to the underground Metro of Moscow, *Last Light* features mutated humans and other beasts that don't incite the terror *Dead Space* does... but they're still unnerving and awful.

STANDOUT MOMENT



HEAD BANGING

The first time you realise the Ishimura is truly screwed

As you're walking down a corridor near the start of the game, you start to hear the repetitive, dull sound of flesh on metal. Thwak, thwak, thwak. You round a corner, the lights flicker, your boots hit the metal ground and echo around the corridors. Thwak, thwak, thwak. Then you see him – a man is standing there, hitting his head against the wall. His head is partly caved in, but he doesn't stop. You move on, and as the man moves out of sight, there's one punctuating, final *thwak*. His head has caved, you know it, and then, suddenly, you understand how dangerous and dark the indoctrination of the alien Marker is.

before – like some weird, eerily quiet hospital or something), didn't make it scary. No, a good horror game needs something else, something that is threatening, something visceral... something *other*.

"I have to give full credit to Ben [Wanat], our production designer [for the Necromorphs]," admits Milham. "He really wanted the enemies to feel relatable – aliens can feel the same as I said with space ships; they can feel *apart* from humans, you know, like insects or something, and that's not what we wanted. We really wanted a horror and pathos to the enemies, and that came with this horrible foreshadowing, too, you know? You could see these things and we wanted you to think, 'well, this is going to happen to you if they getcha!' By making the main enemies of the game from humans, by making them readable in that way, they become repulsive, they become alarming, they become relatable. They're evocative in a way that some space bug just isn't."

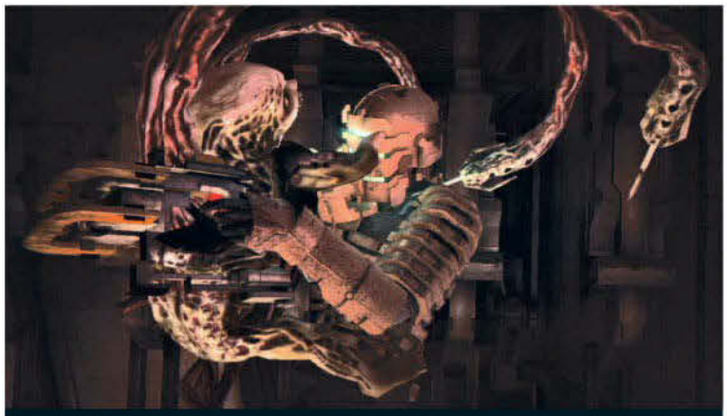
Milham isn't wrong – as the series went on and on, getting more experimental within this niche it eked out for itself, we saw the enemy designs tap more into psychological horror. It wasn't just adult humans flinging themselves at you by the end, oh no – Visceral began including young children, dogs, and grotesques made from multiple human corpses... it began to deconstruct exactly what horror game enemies were, and make you question them, too.

"[Wanat] is a genius," laughs Milham as we discuss the enemy design. "The way they were made; we'd sketch, block-in and animate one enemy in a weekend. Quick and dirty, y'know? Each enemy is a skill test, shooting-wise, so silhouettes became very important to us – headshots, legshots, armshots, blades... depending on what each enemy had (and what *you* shot), it'd change the entire firefight. So to make them readable, we had to match up their shape with what would happen – you think 'oh no, if I shoot this one's belly something awful will happen,' or 'if I shoot this one's legs, it won't be able to move.' We needed to communicate that, so that belly? That really needs to heave, that really needs to move around. You, the player, need to look at that and think 'oh God, *that* has got something different going on.'"

Not only did *Dead Space* put you up against these body horror nightmares, it also kept you close to them – too close for comfort – with the corridors and architecture of the Ishimura. It was a







AURAL FIXATION

On creating a game that can terrify players without them even needing to look at the screen

Dead Space didn't approach sound traditionally – instead, it took on the challenge of creating the soundscape as a single unit that reacted to the player's actions to create an oppressive tone and ambience. The game's sound designer, Don Veca, relied more on sound effects and atmospheric noises than a traditional soundtrack, blurring the line between the aural partitions of the game. Recorded in 5.1 surround sound, the game took on a life of its own through speakers – you could leave 'music' behind, hearing something play out behind you as you move away from an encounter only to hear some awful fleshy ripping coming from ahead of you.

> "IF YOU SAW THIS THING MOVING TOWARDS YOU WITH ITS BLADE WE WANTED YOU TO GO, 'EESH'"

perfect storm, the whole game fusing a unique art style with an enemy force that was smart enough to understand the ship and its overall art direction. It was claustrophobic and imposing, and that was all part of the intent.

"We had to plan a *lot* for the distances you'd be fighting these enemies at," Milham reveals. "If you saw this thing moving towards you with its blade, we wanted you to go 'eesh' – make it look sharp, like you didn't know what range this thing had straight away. We iterated a lot. In fact, some of the enemies just didn't make it in because they became this mess of arms and legs at a distance, and we needed something cleaner, that you could identify."

Of course, the whole point of these familiar monsters was Visceral moving away from the standard humanoid enemies you'd have faced in *Resident Evil* or *Silent Hill*. They needed to be fresh, terrifying, unknown. And you needed to have unconventional 'weapons' to fight them with. Isaac Clarke, your erstwhile in-game avatar, wasn't a soldier. He was an engineer, and the game didn't let you forget that.

"Our game designer and creative director explained that the core mechanic was going to be dismemberment and strategic shooting, rather than just blasting with tons of bullets," Milham reflects. "That made the factors in our weapon designs easy for us to guess; that meant we needed a high rate of fire, but a narrow area of effect. If we had something with a high rate of fire, it needed, like, *no* area of effect. We'd take that basic idea, prototype the blade sizes, nail those down, and *then* we would fictionalise it – asking, 'do we make it a mining tool, a surgery tool, whatever,' – and then we took it from there."

It created an experience that's only really been replicated by the atmospheric and generally brilliant *Alien: Isolation* since this idea of scrounging around a derelict space station, reclaiming whatever mechanical parts you could get your oil-stained gloves on and cramming them into anything that might act like a gun. Over three games, that formula remained unique – commentators might say that the *Dead Space* series lost its way by the time that the latest game, *Dead Space 3*, came around, but Visceral never compromised: each game was as well-realised and certain in its approach to setting and gunplay as the original.

After we wrap up our chat about all the old games, we ask the now-general manager of Visceral about whether or not we're likely to see another *Dead Space* game leave the studio's doors. "Many, *many* people here at Visceral have a warm spot in their heart for *Dead Space*, and right now we're busy with *Hardline* and, 'other things...'" Papoutsis reveals. "But it's definitely something we'd love to look at again, and there's definitely a lot of interest internally for us to pick that up again at a future date." Its like you can see him smile as he says that, like he knows something we don't...

PLAY PLUS

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INTERVIEW

FROM HEAVEN TO HELL

Dominic Matthews of Ninja Theory, the studio behind Heavenly Sword and DmC, talks about making 'independent triple-A' PS4 exclusive, Hellblade

The first thing we noticed with *Hellbalde* is the over-the-shoulder camera. Can you talk about why you chose to use that camera style?
It's really to try and make the game feel intimate to Senua. The whole experience is about Senua's personal journey into Hell, so we wanted to make everything feel close to her, to reflect that. We use the camera to show you the world and the events of the game from her perspective – so the player sees the world that she sees. We toyed with the idea of having fixed cameras in the game, but that's not possible for a team of our size to do. It took *thousands* of hours to review and tweak those cameras and get them right [for *Heavenly Sword*], so we wanted to choose a camera system that gave us flexibility, without having to spend months to get the right tone.

That leads onto combat – the camera drops to the bottom right side of the screen. How did you end up deciding that was what you wanted?
So, the combat is very different from *DmC*. There, you had enemies all up around you, around your head, and you had to control them. This is different. In *Hellblade*, you are going to have an enemy right in front of you, and you're going to have to deal with them. That's it – between one and three enemies. We wanted to keep the camera intimate, so you could see the details of both your opponents and Senua. We needed to make each fight feel meaningful, that every enemy you defeat feels significant, like in regular one-on-one fighter games. We've taken a lot [of cues] from one-on-one fighters when developing the fighting system – mainly the idea that in those kinds of games you have to defeat your opponents over two rounds, or you fail. Whether you're playing in Arcade mode or against another person, fail twice and you have lost. Game over. We kind of want that feeling with *Hellblade*: like it's life or death. So keeping the camera in that position makes you feel up closer to that fight and it makes you feel the pressure.

> "WE DON'T WANT TO GIVE YOU VARIETY, WE WANT TO GIVE YOU DEPTH"

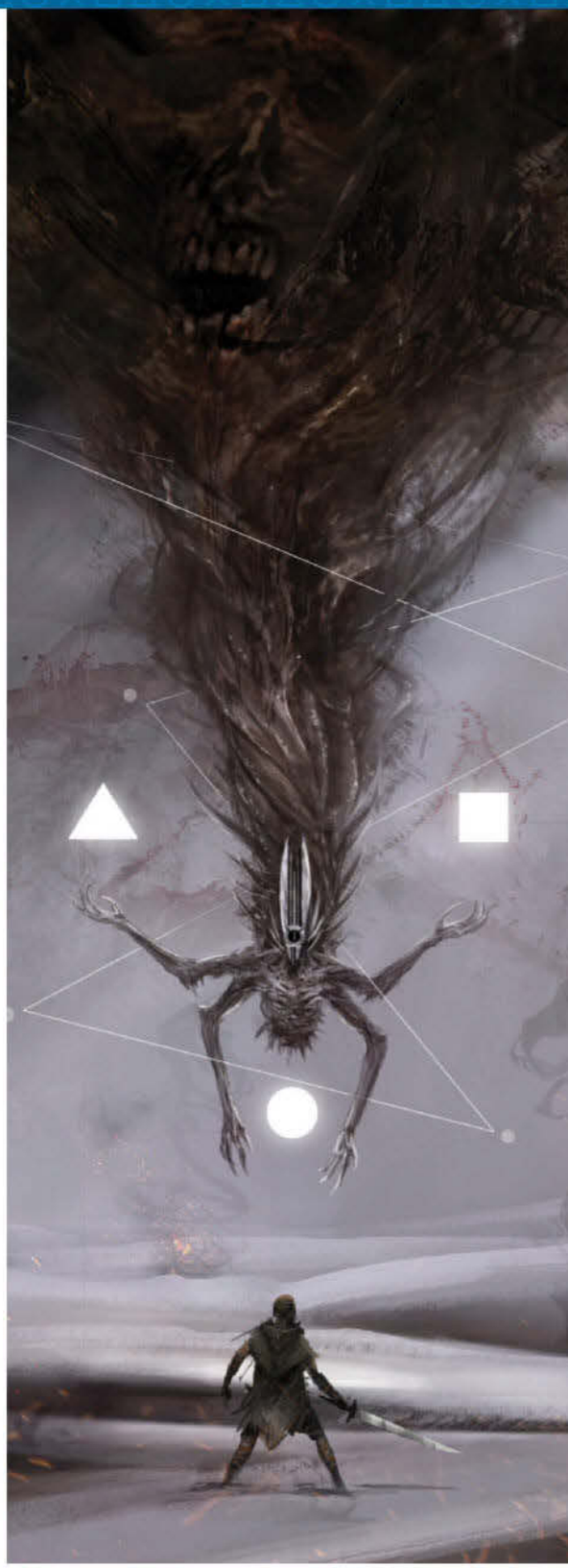
We've got a damage system, too – we needed it to be visible when the enemies were damaged, and it's the same with Senua, too. We want fights to feel dramatic and the camera really helps with that.

You mentioned a little about on-screen damage effects there – they're in the game because there's no HUD. Is that because you intended that the game to feel as cinematic as possible?
Absolutely. We wanted people to be really invested in Senua and her story, and any elements that are inherently 'gamey' break that immersion and take you out of the experience. So we're going completely HUD-less, but that gives us challenges in how we communicate certain things to the player. Health, for example – how do we tell the player Senua is low on health without any kind of bar? At the moment we're looking at representing that in Senua's 'state' – if she's wounded, she looks wounded, she animates like a wounded person. If

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she's *really* low on health, she's in a critical state, she's actually down on the floor, fighting for her life. We're using audio to guide the player as well – we have got a much greater reliance on audio and sound than other games, perhaps.

We're creating a combat system that we're giving to the player in its entirety from the very beginning of the game. It'll be up to the player to understand and explore that – rather than us building skill trees or allowing you to unlock abilities as you go through. It's just like if you pick up Ryu [in *Street Fighter*]; all of his moves are there to use right away if you've got the skill. We want to do the same thing with Senua. That's why we've got one weapon as well, it's the sword and it's about mastering it. We don't want to give you variety; we want to give you depth.

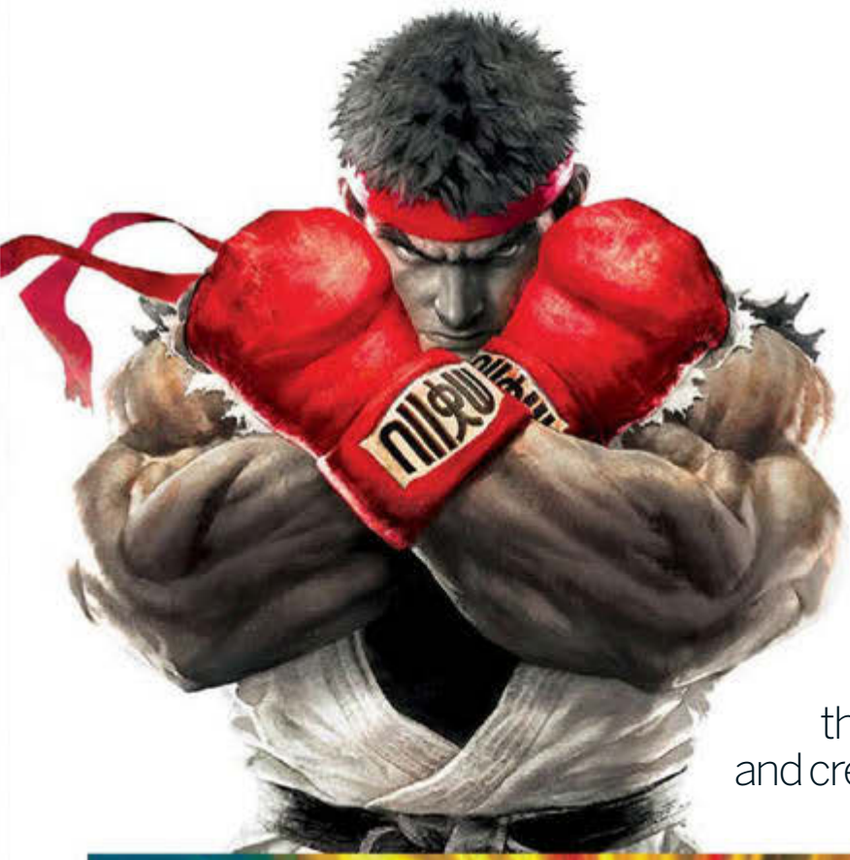
So how do you plan on using audio to essentially replace the HUD elements, then? It seems like it is pretty ambitious...

We're experimenting at the moment – we're actually working with an external group called Sweet Justice, who have some fantastic *Unreal* experience, and they are helping us out with by lending their expertise to build that audio picture of the game. We want that to be incredibly detailed with a lot of nuance – we want you, as a player, to understand the detail in the sounds that you hear. You know, with health you get things like big screen effects that flash red, proclaiming 'you're gonna die!' It's things like that which I think that are a step better than a health bar, but they still take you out of the experience. Particularly in a third-person game, because what are you seeing there? Just red flashes... Okay!

Back to the fighting style of *Hellblade*, it felt incredibly similar to *SoulCalibur* – even down to just guards and Guard Impacts. Is that something the programmers have taken specific inspiration from?

We have looked at quite a few fighting games... well, when I say we have looked at them, what I mean is, basically, the guys in the team are fans of these games, and we crowd around and look at something and figure out, 'what have [they] done here?', 'what good about this?' We build a picture, trying to create something that ticks all of the relevant boxes of good combat. Responsive, fast, fluid, brutal... with that feeling that every move has weight to it. Those are really the over-arching goals we want to get from combat, so rather than looking at specific mechanics in different games and saying 'oh that's cool, we should do that', we are trying to create more of a bigger picture.

One of the ways we're trying to add depth to the combat, for example, is in the blocking. We've got deflections and we've got directional blocking. So rather than just going, 'oh, and here's the block button', we're doing more – players that want to get really skilled at that kind of defensive, guard-reliant gameplay *can* get good at that, because it's an option we're making available.



EXTENDED PLAY

STREET FIGHTER

Looking forward to getting a taste of the next generation of fighting games with Street Fighter V? There's plenty of one-on-one action you can indulge in to help pass the time and develop your skills for when Ryu and crew roll back onto the scene early next year...



"STREET FIGHTER III THIRD STRIKE IS THE BEST FIGHTING GAME EVER MADE"

ULTRA STREET FIGHTER IV

■ **THE MOST OBVIOUS** way to work on your fighting game skills is clearly just to stick with the big fighting game of the moment and keep playing. *Ultra Street Fighter IV* is due to arrive on PS4 soon for those who want the definitive article, and it's this that will become the tournament standard version on release. Despite having put literally *weeks* into this game, we're still finding new combos and possibilities with characters that we play on a weekly basis, so there's scope for players of all levels to be able to pick up new skills in this way. Playing similar level opponents online and watching replays and tournaments are excellent ways to do this – keep an eye on what your opponents is doing, and always ask yourself *why* they're doing what they are doing and if you could benefit from emulating similar tricks.



LEARN STICK

■ **IF YOU'RE STILL** playing fighting games on pad, this little bit of downtime might just be exactly what you need to move your skills over to an arcade stick. It does take some learning, and you will almost certainly play worse for a little while after making the jump. But the more you play, the more you'll come to realise just how much more practical a stick layout is for advanced combos and inputs – we can't even imagine pulling off long FADC combos on a pad without setting up shortcuts, and that's not going to go down too well on a competitive stage. *Skullgirls* on PS4 will allow the use of PS3 sticks, so hopefully the big boys will follow suit. Getting a Mad Catz TE or Hori RAP now might not be such a bad play after all...



STREET FIGHTER III THIRD STRIKE ONLINE EDITION

■ **IT'S A MATTER** of taste, sure, but for our money, *Third Strike* is the best fighting game ever made. The parry mechanic alone is about as satisfying as anything in gaming can be, and there's nothing quite like the feeling of correctly predicting your opponent's moves and brushing them off before landing a solid counter-barrage of your own. If not for the world-class gameplay, it's worth going back to *Third Strike* purely to get to know some of the less obvious characters – polls have *SFIII* stars like Alex, Q and Urien way ahead of most other options, so it seems likely that Capcom will give the old roster some love in *SFV.*



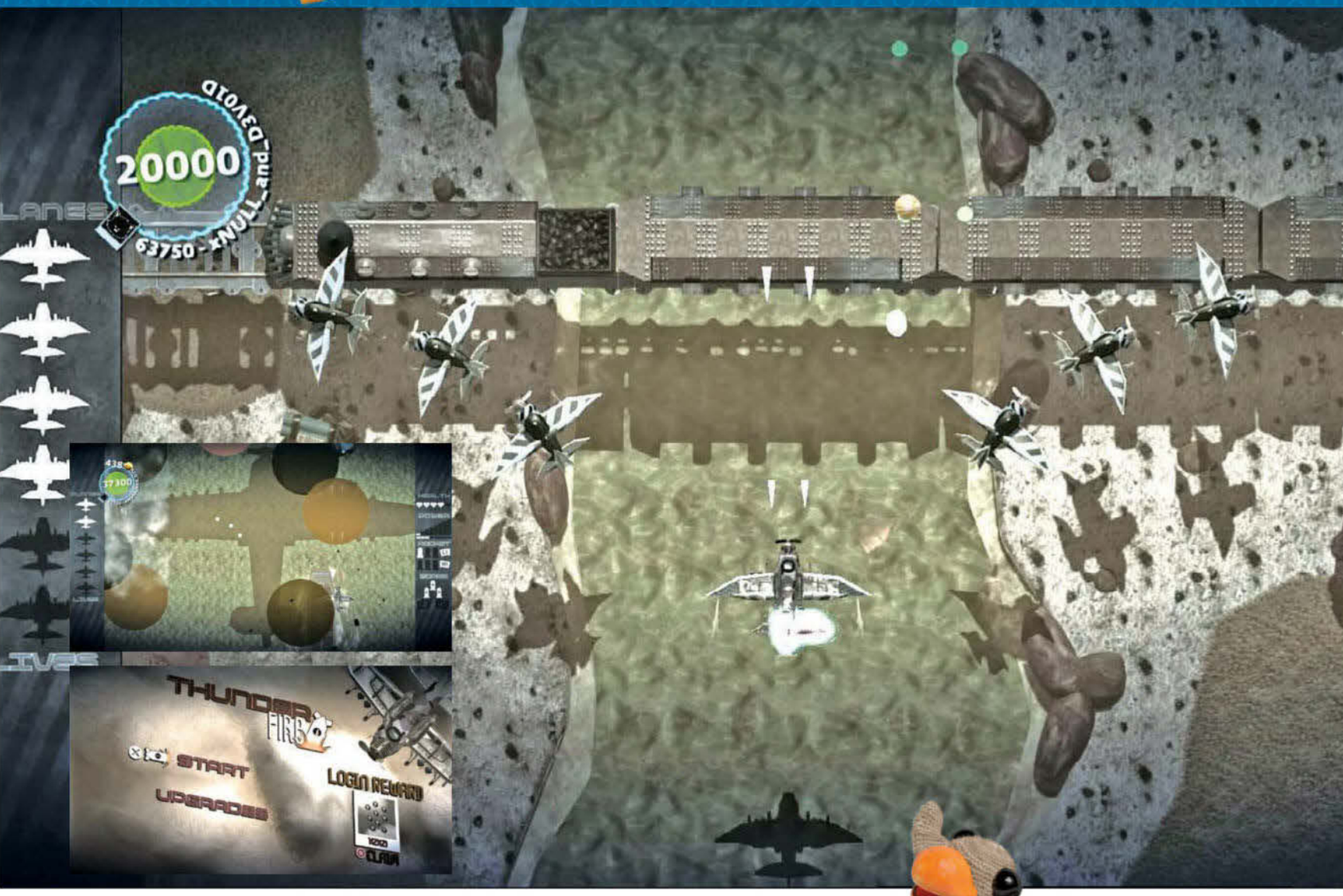
CHECK THE STREAMS

■ **WHILE YOU'VE PRETTY** much always been able to watch the pros go at it in tournament live streams and match vids, everyone is streaming these days. Shop around for a mid-to-high level player whose character choice and personality works for you then just stay glued to their channel when you're not doing anything else. Watching others play is always a great way to see moves used in different ways and discover tricks that may help when you find yourself faced with similar match-ups, plus there are some amazing videos on YouTube that really tear the mechanics of these games to pieces – Desk (YT: biffotasty) in particular is great at breaking down how things work and why, with practical applications for most of it.



GO OLD-SCHOOL

■ **JUST AS WE** sent you back to *Third Strike* to get a better understanding of the older *Street Fighter* roster, it might also be an idea to go even further back. Later *Alpha* characters like R. Mika get a lot of love from fans so chances are there'll be an appearance from one of the old *Alpha* faces in *SFV* – Eagle or Karin would be cool, too. If nothing else, the *Alpha* games are simply still great fun to play and the combo-heavy nature of the later ones seems to be in line with where Capcom is taking us with *SFV*. Go back and get your combos down, people!



MASTERCLASS

LITTLEBIGPLANET 3

This time, we have a rather old-school shooter in the style of arcade classics such as 1942 or Strikers 1945...



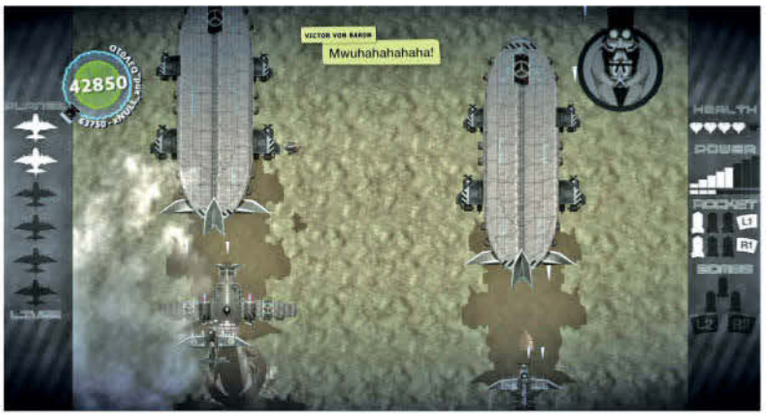
TIME TAKEN TO MAKE: Four weeks **NUMBER OF PLAYS:** 10,258 **TIMES HEARTED:** 1,297

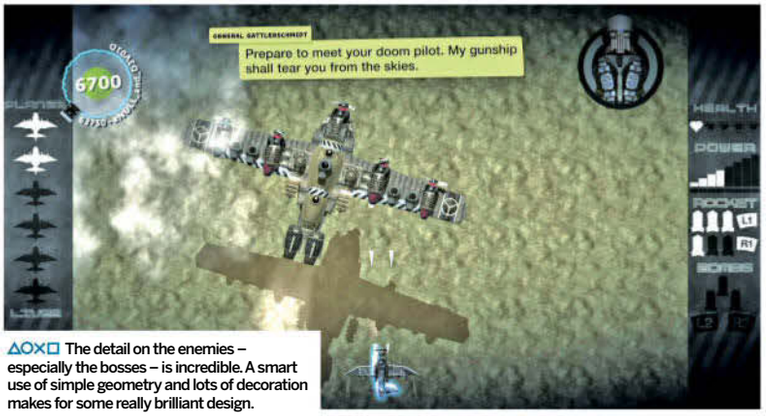
■ **IT'S NOT EASY** to make a scrolling shooter. Sure, we see enough top-down levels in *LittleBigPlanet*, and some of the tools added into *LBP3* have made crafting a level from a bird's-eye perspective is easier than ever – no longer relying on glitches in the Create tools. The real challenge in creating a scrolling shooter is making one that is not only constant fun to play, but also finding a good balance in difficulty. Lordwarblade's sepia-toned shooter, Thunderfire, is reminiscent of Psikyo's old arcade shooter, *Strikers 1945*, featuring old-school war planes and assaults from enemy aircraft and anti-air missiles from the ground. It's a fantastic homage to Psikyo's shooter and the many games like it.

The reason for that is its incredible detail, not only in how the level *looks* but how it plays, too. The full 16 layers for each level has helped make a stage with a good deal of depth to it – whether it's a train crossing the stage on the ground below, a cloud softly breezing by to block your view, or even the giant shadow of an overhead bomber darkening the whole level. That last point is particularly important, because as much as it adds variety to the level, it also acts as a gameplay signifier, drawing attention to your rare ability and making it *look* as powerful as it needs to. That's the kind of subtle thing that a shooter needs if it's to stand out, and it really shows how much its creator knows about the genre.

Speaking of which, it's probably worth mentioning the enemies of this stage. The trick to playing any shooter is memorising patterns – but more than that, it's about learning how each enemy attacks, and using unique enemies as a reminders to tell







△○×□ The detail on the enemies – especially the bosses – is incredible. A smart use of simple geometry and lots of decoration makes for some really brilliant design.



△○×□ It'll be much tougher the first few times, perhaps too tough to even finish. The upgrade system means you can get further and further each time, rewarding replays.

you what part of the level you're up to. Knowing when and where a new set of enemy fighter planes will come in is one thing, but knowing the direction they take and even the route their bullets will follow is what leads to success here. Then there are boss battles, which veterans of this genre will know to be perhaps the most important thing you need to get right. Boss battles fill significant parts of the stage, and the challenge that comes with taking them down will give you a reason to perfect your run. Making the three distinct phases all work smoothly with one another, however, is not a simple task – and Lordwarblade should be commended on the effort he's put into these key parts of his shooter.

And while most top-down shooters feature a power-up or upgrade system, this level instead mixes that up a little. You still collect items from enemies but here they can be used to permanently upgrade your aircraft in whichever way you choose. You might wish to improve your cannon fire, the damage of your bombs, or perhaps the strength of the 'magnet' that draws in experience points. In case you're wondering, this system is handled through Collectibles – the go-to new feature of *LBP3* for when you want to include character upgrade options, it seems. There's so many more tiny little things about Thunderfire that make it such a standout *LBP3* level – from the quiet flicker of enemies to highlight a successful hit or the intricately created interface added onto the screen – but the most impressive element is that, when playing it, you'll likely forget you're playing *LBP* at all.

CREATOR CURATOR

We have a chat with creator, Lordwarblade, about how he made his top-down shooter

What was the hardest part of making your level?
I'd have to say the last boss battle was the hardest as I had trouble making all three of its forms work smoothly with each other. Also, I had issues with the level's sound glitching out on me so that voices from magic mouths could not be heard at all and some other sound effects just failed to play at certain points.

What tricks did you use to create a top-down viewpoint that works so well?
The main trick was to get the camera angle just right. I wanted it to be at an angle that would show the sides of the models in the level as well as keep a good view that allowed the player to see everything coming on-screen. Using decorations is essential to building a top-down level as they can be placed on any surface at any angle, allowing for some intricate and good-looking models.

Were there any other levels or games that inspired you to create Thunderfire?
I have always enjoyed scrolling shooters and got most of my inspiration to make this level from the old *Strikers 1945* game and the recent *Sky Force* on Android. There are many other games like those that also helped inspire me to make this level. I wanted to build a shooter that wasn't based around space ships so a war-themed level seemed the right way to go.

Was it difficult finding a balance in difficulty?
Yes, it was difficult finding a decent balance in terms of difficulty, especially since my previous shooters on *LBP Vita* had a 50/50 mix of players saying they were either too hard or too easy. I decided to just make it the way I would like it if I were to play, and so went for a challenging experience that I had hoped would get people thinking while shooting. Originally I wanted to go with the bullet hell experience but then quickly changed it to a more precise shooter. I know most players would prefer an easier level but this was built for the more hardcore shoot-'em-up player to appreciate.

Do you think the improvements in *LittleBigPlanet 3* made creating your level easier?
Yes, the new features did help with creating the level but also the glitches that the game has also contributed to certain things in the level especially with the use of the logic. Working around the glitches helped me find solutions which improved the level in the long run. My favourite tools would have to be the Dephysicalise tool and the Physics tweaker – both of those tools allow a lot more freedom when creating levels, especially ones like this which require certain models to collide with the level border and bullets but not each other.

Are there any other levels or ideas you have that you'd like to work on next, if so, what?
There are quite a few, actually. I have a level I want to create that I started in *LBP2* before my profile became corrupted called Sack Of Darkness which was going to be a side-scrolling hack-and-slash, mostly in silhouette using a load of animated creatures and set pieces. I also have started working on two other shooters and would love to make a top-down RPG.

HOW TO...

GET 'S' RANKS IN HOTLINE MIAMI 2

If you're going for the Platinum Trophy on Hotline Miami 2, you'll need at least an A+ on every level. We explain how you can do just that...



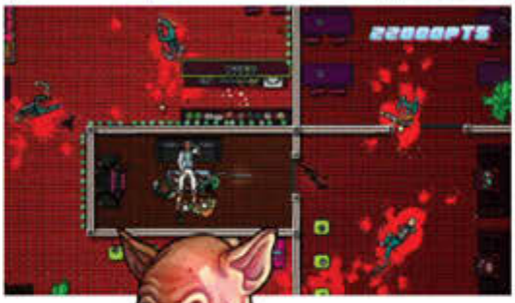
■ **JUST LIKE THE** first game in the series, *Hotline Miami 2: Wrong Number* doesn't make any effort to explain its scoring system in the slightest. That could be a bit of an issue for the score attackers among you who are compulsively chasing those S and A+ rankings. But fortunately for you, we have pulled out all the stops and got our fair share of those top-end rankings, and we are going to tell you how to do it by breaking down the scoring system and explaining what you should focus on.

UNDERSTAND THOSE NUMBERS

■ **THE FIRST THING** you need to do is understand what that breakdown at the end of each level means. Flexibility relates to how you mix up your attacks – switch up your weapons to improve this score. Your Mobility score will be higher if you keep moving, naturally, so try not to stand still. Boldness is a reflection of risk taking – exposing yourself to enemies will help here. Finally, Special is a fixed score that's determined by the character that you play.







COMBOS ARE KING

■ **THE BEST ADVICE** we can give for hitting high scores is to prioritise combos. Getting a monster combo on any level is going to put you on the path to getting those S grades. It will also help you to boost some of the game's other scoring elements. Trying to combo every bad guy on a floor will necessitate you keeping your mobility high and will see you taking the kinds of risks that will boost your Boldness score. Be aware that it's possible to keep your combo as you progress up floors. Always do that if you can, because that'll allow you to rack up a huge multiplier.



FOCUS ON MELEE

■ **YOU GET MORE** points for melee kills than you do when you use firearms. Obviously, that means that using melee weapons is generally preferable. Additionally, remember that you get more points for executions (kills that are performed after an enemy is knocked down) than normal kills, so try and get those visceral finishers in whenever possible. However, *do not* do any of this at the expense of combos. If you need to pick up a firearm to keep a combo going, make sure you do it. If the long animation of an execution kill might interrupt your combo, avoid it.

USE YOUR ABILITIES

■ **FOR SOME LEVELS,** you're stuck using a particular character, but when you do have a choice, always be aware of how to properly leverage each character's abilities. Corey's roll is great for closing the distance on enemies with firearms to keep combos going, for example. Or you can use firearms as a lure to attract enemies while playing as chainsaw-and-gun duo Alex and Ash. As such, it's worth experimenting with characters on each stage, thinking about how their particular skill set suits the level.

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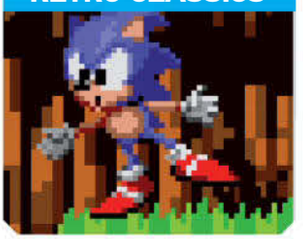
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NEVER ALONE

PLATFORM: PS4 **DIFFICULTY:** 1/5
TROPHIES: 15 0 1 1 13

■ **AS LOVELY AS** *Never Alone* is, it's not a game you'll want to play for Trophies. Of the 15 Trophies available, eight will be unlocked as part of the game's completion. After that, it's simply a case of ensuring you explore everywhere possible (and bear in mind this is a 2D platformer, there aren't many places things can hide) to find all 24 Cultural Insights. Two of these are automatically unlocked anyway, while one is unlocked after starting a new game and watching the opening cutscene. So, all in all, there is, one in Chapter 1, four in Chapter 2, three in Chapter 3, three in Chapter 4, three in Chapter 5, three in Chapter 6, two in Chapter 7, one in Chapter 8, one in Chapter 9, and finally, one in the Epilogue. Phew.





TOWER OF GUNS

PLATFORM: PS4/PS3 **DIFFICULTY:** 3/5
TROPHIES: 12 0 1 4 7

■ **THOUGH THE GAME** can become quite hectic and challenging, *Tower Of Guns*' Trophy list isn't going to require much more effort on your part. With that said, you'll still need to play this through a whole bunch of times – 50 separate, complete runs for 'This Is Getting Interesting', for example – as well as a need to unlock every weapon and perk. There are a couple to watch out for, such as 'At Least You'll Get A Trophy For It...', which, brilliantly, unlocks after being killed by a boss exploding. That's an easy one to aim for. Then there's 'Start With a Jump...', which is earned easily on any of the levels with air that pushes you higher up to new platforms – all you need to do for this is simply jump into the air and stay there for 45 seconds. After that, there isn't much else that will not unlock naturally, and there is no Platinum Trophy to concern yourself with, either.

AARU'S AWAKENING

PLATFORM: PS4/PS3 **DIFFICULTY:** 3/5
TROPHIES: 15 0 5 5 5

■ **SADLY, WE'RE GIVEN** another game that doesn't reward much in the way of Trophies, but you will need to practice to achieve 100% of the accolades here. You're rated upon completion of each of the four stages with bronze, silver or gold medals – which conveniently corresponds to each of the Trophies you'll unlock, too; a set of three Trophies for each stage. Then there are three more for getting bronze/silver/gold on all four of the stages to mop up the remaining three Trophies. *Aaru's Awakening* is a quirky little platformer and though the later worlds are quite tricky, it's nothing that you can't succeed at eventually with enough practice. Since your score is as much about speed as anything else, learning the four different stages is the most important aspect – so you will need to keep trying to shave seconds off your time and avoiding your own death. Don't forget some of the fancy skill shots you can do with your teleport orb to really keep the pace up.







KILLZONE MERCENARY

PLATFORM: VITA **DIFFICULTY:** 3/5
TROPHIES: 53 1 2 8 42

■ **AS MUCH AS** you'll enjoy *Killzone: Mercenary*, if you're hoping to grab that Platinum you're going to need to put in a big chunk of time. First, start by completing the game on Veteran difficulty, looking for and unlocking each bit of Intel as you do. After that you'll need to play through each mission again three times, one for each of the three distinct contract types: Covert, Demolition and Precision. These give you certain objectives to complete with each playthrough, directing your play style. There are a selection of mission-specific Trophies to keep an eye out for also, but many will come naturally as part of the contract objectives – so check them out but don't worry too much about them until last. After that, it's on to multiplayer, which will be a big grind: you'll need to rack up 100 matches and many more kills on top of that. There are some multiplayer combat-specific Trophies, too, but in all honestly all but 'Spangled' should occur naturally. That one Trophy, however, is tricky to get: it requires being shot with a tranquilliser dart, then recovering, which, as you might expect, rarely happens. If at all possible, try and enlist a friend to help you out with this one. Yeah, it's cheating, but we're letting it slide.

MONSTERBAG

PLATFORM: VITA **DIFFICULTY:** 1/5
TROPHIES: 13 0 1 3 9

■ **ANOTHER ONE THAT** doesn't have much in the way of Trophies to look out for, and the descriptions won't tell you much, either. In truth, there are clues – so if you have a read up on what you can expect to look out for, you might be able to figure it out at the right time that you need to unlock them. Failing that, this quirky little adventure game isn't too long; it's certainly worth enjoying for one playthrough and, once you're aware of what tasks are being put your way, play through it a second time to focus on unlocking the remaining Trophies. Some will unlock naturally as you play, after all, and there aren't that many that won't – so, perhaps just this once, maybe don't worry too much about those Trophies, eh? We won't tell if you don't.





DISHONORED

PLATFORM: PS3 **DIFFICULTY:** 2/5
TROPHIES: 51 1 3 5 42

■ **HERE'S A REAL** treat, and one that Trophy hunters ought to really love. You'll need two playthroughs – it might sound like a pain, but the second isn't actually going to take long. The first playthrough should be completed *only* using the ability Blink level 1; don't unlock any other abilities or you'll void 'Mostly Flesh And Steel'. You're going to want aim for the 'High Chaos' ending here, so feel free to murder everyone you see. Hunt for all the Runes and complete each and every one of the side-missions, too. You may as well mop up some of the combat specific Trophies as well, since you want that High Chaos rating. The second playthough is stealth only; it's quicker since you don't need to complete the side-missions. One last thing, don't forget to make a permanent save on the final chapter – you can then use this as a chapter select option to clean up the remaining Trophies.

INSTANT GAME COLLECTION

ZEN PINBALL 2

If you can think of theme for a pinball table, there's a pretty good chance that Zen Pinball 2 has it. The question is: are you willing to pay money for them? You should be...



■ **LIKE THE GAME** it is based off, the way that *Zen Pinball* works is pretty simple. You can download the game for free and you are given one free table that you can play as much as you like. If you want grab yourself additional tables, then it's a case of chucking a couple of quid or so at the game for whatever tables you want.

You don't really need us to spend a lot of your time explaining what the game is – it's pinball, and surely you all have a basic idea of what the basic rules of pinball are. All you need to know here is that the physics feel comfortably realistic and it is well made from a technical perspective, plus many tables play with the videogame nature to offer experiences that couldn't work in real life.

The other benefit that *Zen Pinball 2* can offer you over a real pinball machine is, of course, online leaderboard competition with your friends. If all you want to do is battle back and forth on the free Sorcerer's Lair table, then the game's not going to stop you.

However, if you do want to venture out and try some new tables, you will be pleased to hear that many tables offer a free trial, meaning you can get a test of a table before deciding whether it's worth forking out for or not.

It might end up as no more than a fun little distraction that you drop into now and again, but so what if that's all it ends up being for you? It's free, it's fun and it's definitely worth a look, if only to try it out.

TONS OF TABLES

From other videogames, to comic books and films, there are a whole load of crossover tables on offer



GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

There are a bunch of Marvel tables available for *Zen Pinball 2*, but we've picked out the table based on the insanely brilliant *Guardians Of The Galaxy* movie.



THE WALKING DEAD

Of course *Zen Pinball 2* has a *The Walking Dead* table. This one is based on the acclaimed videogame series, rather than the equally popular TV show, though.



STAR WARS

If crossovers are happening, chances are *Star Wars* is going to be involved in some form or another. So is the case with *Zen Pinball 2* and with these packs of tables.

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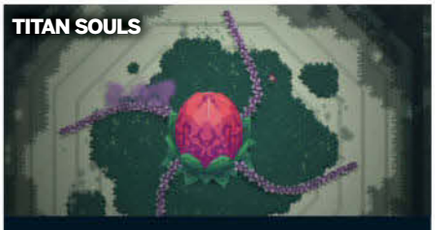
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TOURNAMENTS!

Keep an eye on our Facebook and Twitter channels for information on our Twitch tournaments, where you can play videogames with us for the world to watch! The game changes each time, and the best players will win prizes – free games, or just some of the other tat that we found around our office. Come and join in the fun next time and maybe you could win something neat.



BLOODBORNE

Watch us boss the city of Yharnam as we take the skills we've honed in From Software's *Dark Souls* series (namely skirting around enemies to not end up with sharp objects in our faces) over to one of the PS4's biggest and best exclusives.



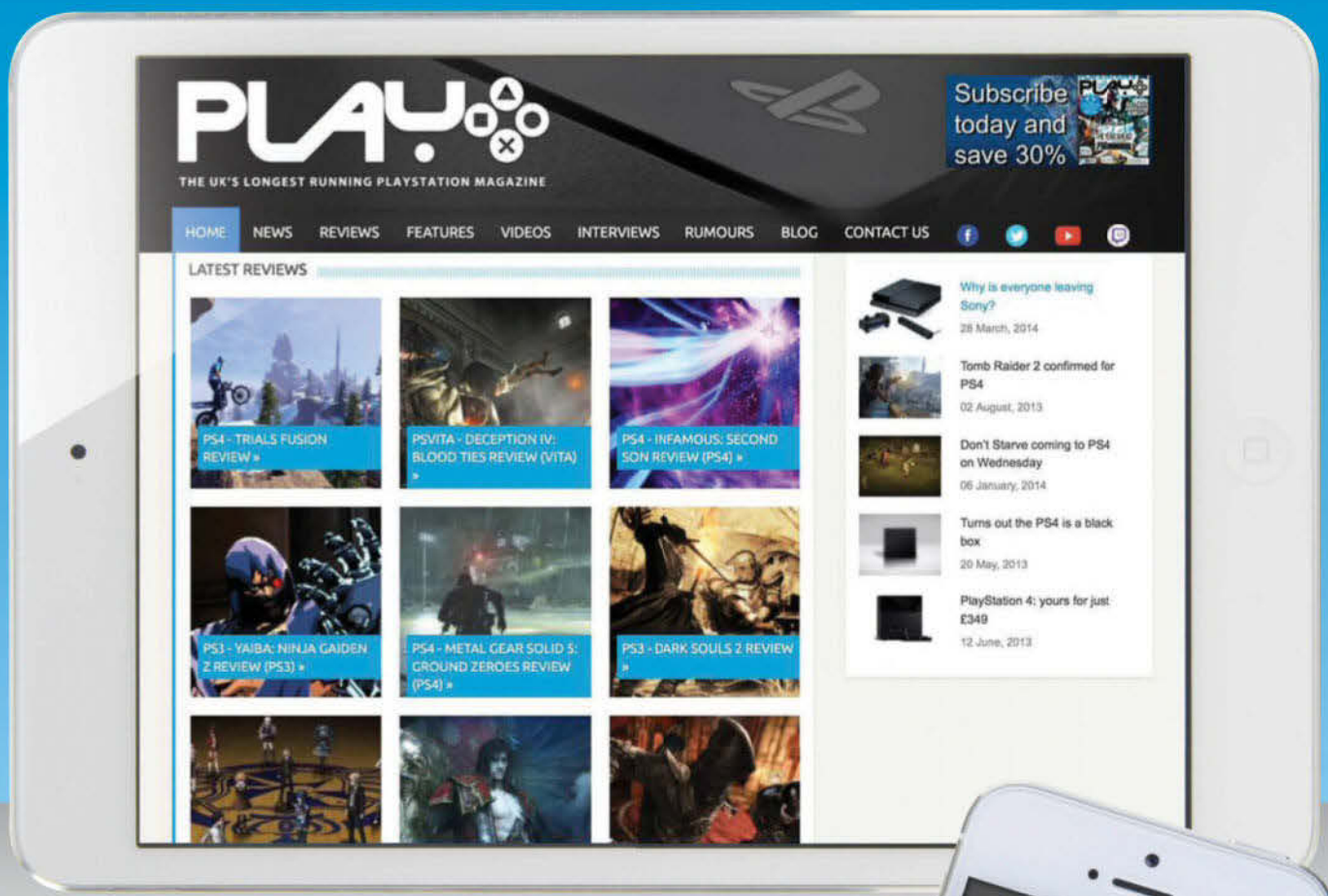
BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE

Join us playing *Battlefield Hardline* as we complain about people not playing the objective and blame anything we do wrong on our squadmates. That's the way to play *Battlefield* and we are masters at it.

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PLAY PLUS PlayList

IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT A GAME SCORED THEN THESE PAGES ARE FOR YOU

TEAM PICKS GAMING OBSESSIONS





top five
LUKE ALBIGÉS

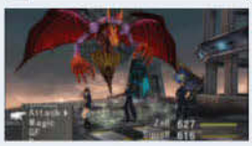
1. Monster Hunter Freedom Unite
2. FFXIV: A Realm Reborn
3. Diablo III: Reaper Of Souls
4. Borderlands 2
5. Destiny





top five
LIAM WARR

1. Trials
2. Minecraft
3. FIFA
4. Tony Hawks Underground
5. Virtua Tennis





top five
DREW SLEEP

1. Final Fantasy VIII
2. Metal Gear Solid
3. The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim
4. Fallout 3
5. Mass Effect 2





top five
PAUL WALKER-EMIG

1. Hotline Miami
2. PES 2
3. Metal Gear Solid
4. Final Fantasy VII
5. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

PS4 LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Alien: Isolation	249	90%
Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag	237	83%
Assassin's Creed: Unity	251	65%
Battlefield 4	238	80%
Bound By Flame	245	62%
Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare	251	87%
Call Of Duty: Ghosts	238	75%
Child Of Light	244	79%
CounterSpy	248	50%
Daylight	245	20%
Dead Nation: Apocalypse Edition	242	74%
Dead Or Alive 5: Last Round	254	71%
Destiny	249	85%
Destiny: The Dark Below	252	72%
Diablo III: Reaper Of Souls	248	92%
Disney Infinity 2.0	249	80%
Don't Starve	240	81%
Dragon Age: Inquisition	251	84%
Dragon Ball Xenoverse	255	54%
Driveclub	250	77%
Dying Light	254	85%
Dynasty Warriors 8 XLCE	243	80%
EA Sports UFC	246	75%
Evolve	254	66%
Far Cry 4	251	80%
Fez	243	95%
FIFA 15	249	85%
Final Fantasy Type-0	255	81%
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	243	85%
Game Of Thrones: Iron From Ice	253	80%
Geometry Wars 3: Dimensions	252	92%
Grand Theft Auto V	251	97%
Grim Fandango Remastered	254	83%
Guilty Gear Xrd –SIGN–*	253	93%
Hohokum	248	80%
Hotline Miami 2: Wrong Number	255	93%
inFamous: First Light	249	55%
inFamous: Second Son	242	86%
Killzone Shadow Fall	238	80%
Killzone Shadow Fall: Intercept	246	84%
Knack	238	55%
Lara Croft And The Temple Of Osiris	252	56%
Lego Batman 3: Beyond Gotham	252	68%
Lego Marvel Super Heroes	238	85%
Lego The Hobbit	244	65%
LittleBigPlanet 3	251	92%
Lords Of The Fallen	251	75%
Mercenary Kings	244	85%
Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes	242	85%
Middle-earth: Shadow Of Mordor	250	80%
Murdered: Soul Suspect	246	48%
NBA 2K15	250	84%
Need For Speed Rivals	238	83%
NHL 15	249	63%
Octodad: Dadliest Catch	244	60%
Outlast	241	73%
PES 2015	250	88%
Plants Vs Zombies: Garden Warfare	248	71%
Resident Evil	253	77%
Resogun	238	91%



An addictive and accomplished shoot-'em-up, *Resogun* is an indie delight and a surprise PS4 launch highlight. Awesome stuff.

Resogun Heroes	247	93%
Rogue Legacy	248	91%
Skylanders Swap Force	238	77%
Skylanders Trap Team	250	79%
Sniper Elite III	246	72%
Switch Galaxy Ultra	253	81%
Tales From The Borderlands: Zer0 Sum	252	70%
Teslagrad	253	75%
The Amazing Spider-Man 2	245	25%
The Binding Of Isaac: Rebirth	251	90%
The Crew	252	52%
The Evil Within	250	84%
The Last Of Us Remastered	247	94%
The Order: 1886	254	81%
Thief	241	70%
Tiny Brains	240	68%
Transistor	245	87%
Transformers: Rise Of The Dark Spark	247	30%
Trials Fusion	244	80%
Valiant Hearts	247	64%
War Thunder	239	80%
Watch Dogs	245	80%
Warriors Orochi 3 Ultimate	249	62%
Wolfenstein: The New Order	245	78%
WWE 2K15	252	48%

PS3 LISTING



GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
007 Legends	225	44%
2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil	244	69%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War 2	223	43%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
Aliens: Colonial Marines	230	45%
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Aquapazza: Aquaplus Dream Match	239	70%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Armored Core: For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Army Of Two: The Devil's Cartel	231	44%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed III	225	78%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
Assassin's Creed: Revelations	212	75%
Assassin's Creed: Rogue	251	74%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Ayesha: The Alchemist Of Dust	230	60%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baconing	210	72%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Batman: Arkham Origins	237	85%
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Beyond: Two Souls	236	70%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
BioShock Infinite	230	97%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
Blast Factor	152	72%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Borderlands	185	80%
Borderlands 2	223	90%
Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel	250	69%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Braid	188	93%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers: A Tale Of Two Sons	233	83%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	235	57%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Buzz! Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II	226	80%
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: Gunslinger	232	80%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow 2	241	81%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Catan	195	85%
Cars 2	208	68%
The Cave	230	77%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%

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THIS MONTH'S NEW ENTRIES

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Final Fantasy Type-0	81%
Hotline Miami 2: Wrong Number	93%
Dragon Ball Xenoverse	54%

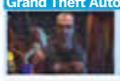
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Commander's Challenge	**185**	**68%**
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Comet Crash	**186**	**84%**
Comix Zone	210	62%
Conan	**160**	**71%**
Condemned 2	165	78%
Costume Quest	**199**	**70%**
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Counter Strike: Global Offensive	**223**	**89%**
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	**218**	**37%**
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Create	**199**	**71%**
Critter Crunch	**188**	**91%**
Cross Edge	**182**	**59%**
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Crysis 2	**204**	**72%**
Crysis 3	230	61%
Cubixx HD	**207**	**76%**
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	**181**	**38%**
Damage Inc: Pacific Squadron WWII	223	37%
Dance Dance Revolution	**201**	**52%**
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
Dark Mist	**164**	**53%**
The Darkness	**154**	**91%**
The Darkness II	**215**	**76%**
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	**211**	**90%**
Dark Souls II	**242**	**90%**
Darkstalkers Resurrection	**230**	**82%**
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	**188**	**83%**
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	**202**	**80%**
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Or Alive 5	**223**	**78%**
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Island: Riptide	**231**	**65%**
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	**211**	**61%**
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	**201**	**92%**
Dead Space 3	228	70%
Dead Space: Extraction	**203**	**88%**
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	**192**	**68%**
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	231	82%
Dead Nation	**201**	**86%**
Deadpool	233	60%
DeathSpank	**195**	**83%**
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	**199**	**72%**
Defiance	231	50%
Demon's Souls	**193**	**92%**
Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	**178**	**29%**
Derrick The Deathfin	227	79%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	**209**	**91%**
Devil May Cry 4	**163**	**89%**
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
Diablo III	**235**	**89%**
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	**219**	**84%**
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
Dishonored	**224**	**92%**
Disney Infinity	235	81%
DJ Hero	**186**	**91%**
DJ Hero 2	**198**	**88%**
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Doom 3: BFG Edition	**225**	**69%**
Double Dragon Neon	224	37%
DmC Devil May Cry	**227**	**93%**
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%
Dragon Age II	**203**	**86%**
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%



DmC injects new life into one of the best genres in all of gaming, and does so with a style and confidence that elevates it beyond its roots.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	**168**	**61%**
Dragon's Crown	235	87%
Driver: San Francisco	**209**	**68%**
Droplitz	**184**	**91%**
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
D&D: Chronicles Of Mystara	**233**	**80%**
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dust 514	**233**	**51%**
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	**208**	**56%**
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7: Empires	**230**	**40%**
Dynasty Warriors 8	234	71%
Earthworm Jim HD	**196**	**89%**
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	**215**	**75%**
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	**178**	**38%**
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	**169**	**85%**
echochrome II	202	83%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	**208**	**64%**
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	**152**	**91%**
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	**212**	**93%**
Elefunk	**170**	**45%**
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	**152**	**69%**
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	**197**	**83%**
Epic Mickey 2: The Power Of Two	226	55%
Eternal Sonata	**176**	**87%**
Eufloria	**212**	**85%**
Everybody's Golf 5	**158**	**88%**
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	**165**	**91%**
Explodemon	**203**	**70%**
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	**185**	**83%**
F1 2011	211	71%
F1 2012	**223**	**79%**
F1 Race Stars	226	61%
FaceBreaker	**170**	**55%**
Fairy Fencer F	250	43%
Fallout 3	**173**	**97%**
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse	**227**	**40%**
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	**172**	**74%**
Far Cry 3	226	88%
Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon	**231**	**85%**
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	**168**	**65%**
FEAR	151	81%
FEAR 2: Project Origin	**176**	**87%**
FEAR 3	208	60%
FIFA 12	**210**	**86%**
FIFA 13	223	82%
FIFA 14	**236**	**90%**
FIFA Street (2012)	**217**	**74%**
Final Fight: Double Impact	**193**	**90%**
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	**203**	**88%**
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	**181**	**84%**
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	236	81%
Final Fantasy XIII	**190**	**85%**
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns	**240**	**80%**
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage 2	**230**	**58%**
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	**179**	**70%**
Folklore	158	66%
Front Mission Evolved	**198**	**52%**
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
From Dust	**211**	**82%**
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	**151**	**69%**
Fuse	232	73%
Game Of Thrones	**220**	**39%**

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	**151**	**38%**
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	**219**	**60%**
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	**183**	**22%**
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	**178**	**38%**
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War: Ascension	**230**	**90%**
God Of War Collection*	**188**	**93%**
God Of War Collection: Volume II	**210**	**70%**
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	**213**	**63%**
Gotham City Imposters	216	78%
Gran Turismo 5	**200**	**85%**
Gran Turismo 6	239	83%
Grand Theft Auto IV	**166**	**98%**
Grand Theft Auto V	**236**	**97%**
Greed Corp	191	75%
Green Day: Rock Band	**194**	**77%**
Grid 2	232	79%
Grid Autosport	**246**	**67%**
GTI Club+	174	72%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	**191**	**94%**
Guardians Of Middle-earth	**227**	**71%**
Guitar Hero III	**160**	**90%**
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	**168**	**63%**
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	**179**	**88%**
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	**197**	**71%**
Guitar Hero World Tour	**173**	**95%**
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	**181**	**85%**
Hamsterball	194	72%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	**182**	**60%**
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	**167**	**64%**
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	**189**	**94%**
Heavy Weapon	**187**	**75%**
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Hitman: Absolution	**225**	**93%**
Hitman HD Trilogy	230	75%
Homefront	**203**	**69%**
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	**212**	**75%**
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hustle Kings	**190**	**87%**
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
I Am Alive	**217**	**64%**
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus HD	**210**	**94%**
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	**168**	**52%**
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	**207**	**83%**
Inferno Pool	181	81%
Injustice: Gods Among Us	**231**	**80%**
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	**166**	**58%**
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	**216**	**82%**
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	**199**	**63%**
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle	**244**	**80%**
Journey	216	87%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	**159**	**78%**
Jurassic Park: The Game	194	60%
Just Cause 2	**190**	**87%**
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	**196**	**71%**
Katamari Forever	184	88%



Rockstar's latest is a masterpiece; the perfect swansong for the generation and a wonderful addition to the franchise.

**denotes import review*

TOP TEN VIOLENT GAMES



1 **Manhunt 2**



2 **Wu-Tang: Taste The Pain**



3 **Mortal Kombat**



4 **The Punisher**



5 **Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge**



6 **The Last Of Us**



7 **Dead Space 2**



8 **Tomb Raider**

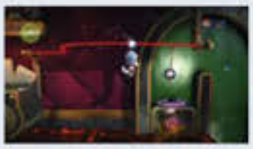


9 **Hotline Miami**



10 **Sleeping Dogs**

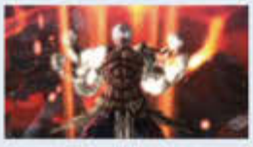
PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LOVE...



CREATING THINGS
PLAY: LITTLEBIGPLANET 3
The cutesy and colourful *LittleBigPlanet* series continues to excel in its first outing on PS4. If you love the idea of making and sharing your own innovative and intriguing levels then this is definitely the game for you.



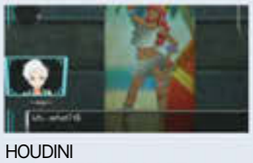
NOBY NOBY BOY
PLAY: HOHOKUM
If you like *Noby Noby Boy*, then its safe to say you like the quirky and colourful and are drawn to games that offer something that is a bit different from the norm. If that sounds like you, then *Hohokum* could be up your street.



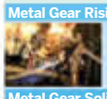
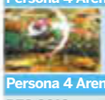
STUPID ANIME
PLAY: ASURA'S WRATH
For anyone who enjoys over-the-top anime, *Asura's Wrath* is a must. This is a game in which you fight a gigantic god who tries to crush you with his continent-sized finger.



TIDYING UP
PLAY: BEYOND: TWO SOULS
The only game that offers a scene where you tidy up and make some dinner, this game isn't for everyone. For those of us who are drawn to those kind of Cageian idiosyncrasies, though, *Beyond* is great.



HOUDINI
PLAY: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD
As well as being a visual novel, this is a puzzle game all about finding ways to escape rooms. You'll also be faced with some difficult decisions about whether to betray your allies.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
Kick-Ass The Game	**194**	**60%**
Killer Is Dead	235	75%
Killzone HD	**225**	**65%**
Killzone 2	**176**	**93%**
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 ReMIX	**236**	**80%**
Kingdom Hearts 2.5 HD ReMIX	252	88%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	**215**	**70%**
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	**213**	**76%**
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	**207**	**20%**
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	**158**	**52%**
Landit Bandit	195	66%
LA Noire	**206**	**91%**
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	**198**	**90%**
The Last Guy	**171**	**91%**
Last Rebellion	**191**	**42%**
Lead And Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	**174**	**54%**
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	**173**	**65%**
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	**194**	**79%**
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	**167**	**73%**
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	**206**	**76%**
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	**160**	**76%**
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Lego: The Lord Of The Rings	**227**	**85%**
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
Limbo	**209**	**90%**
LittleBigPlanet	**172**	**94%**
LittleBigPlanet 2	**201**	**96%**
LittleBigPlanet: Karting	225	85%
LocoRoco Cocorecho!	**159**	**80%**
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	**221**	**45%**
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	**175**	**52%**
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	**192**	**75%**
Lost Planet 3	236	58%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	**163**	**69%**
Lumines Supernova	**178**	**90%**
Madagascar 3	**224**	**39%**
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Madden NFL 13	**223**	**86%**
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	**220**	**70%**
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	**189**	**68%**
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker	202	84%
Magic: Duels Of The Planeswalker 2012	**208**	**70%**
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	**182**	**90%**
Marvel Vs Capcom 3	**202**	**88%**
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	**185**	**57%**
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	**201**	**97%**
Mass Effect 3	**216**	**93%**
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	**161**	**85%**
Medal Of Honor: Warfighter	225	72%
Mega Man 9	**172**	**75%**
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	**171**	**78%**
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	**228**	**91%**
 *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* is another world-class entry in gaming's most fundamentally playable genre.		
Metal Gear Solid 4	**167**	**92%**
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	**214**	**91%**
Metro: Last Light	**231**	**60%**
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Microbot	**202**	**51%**
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	**202**	**38%**
Minecraft	**240**	**93%**
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	**173**	**71%**
MLB: The Show 14	**245**	**90%**
ModNation Racers	**192**	**90%**
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	**195**	**94%**
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat Vs DC Universe	**173**	**68%**
MotoGP 13	233	74%
Motorhead	**173**	**60%**
MotorStorm	**151**	**92%**
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	**203**	**76%**
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	**172**	**93%**
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX Vs ATV Alive	**206**	**42%**
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	**164**	**58%**
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: UNS Generations	**217**	**53%**
Naruto Shippuden: UNS 3	230	85%
Naughty Bear	**195**	**64%**
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA 2K13	**224**	**88%**
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Street: Homecourt	**151**	**68%**
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	**199**	**91%**
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	**225**	**95%**
 *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* is easily the best arcade racer of this generation. We absolutely love it.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	**161**	**86%**
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	**213**	**63%**
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	**215**	**39%**
Nier	192	54%
Ni No Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch	**227**	**85%**
NHL 12	210	78%
NHL 13	**223**	**74%**
NiGHTS Into Dreams...	224	75%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	**154**	**88%**
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	**217**	**63%**
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	231	80%
Noby Noby Boy	**177**	**85%**
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Nucleus	**155**	**82%**
Okami HD	**225**	**90%**
One Piece: Pirate Warriors	**224**	**69%**
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	**205**	**75%**
The Orange Box	**161**	**93%**
Outland	**207**	**72%**
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Overlord II	**181**	**68%**
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	**201**	**91%**
Pain	**183**	**69%**
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Payday 2	**235**	**79%**
Peggle	**189**	**94%**
Persona 4 Arena	**231**	**91%**
 Essential for both *Persona* fans and fighting game enthusiasts, *Persona 4 Arena* is an absolute joy to play.		
Persona 4 Arena Ultimax	**250**	**92%**
PES 2012	**210**	**74%**
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	**169**	**67%**
PixelJunk Shooter	**187**	**93%**
PixelJunk Shooter 2	**204**	**90%**
PixelJunk SideScroller	**213**	**77%**
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
Planet Minigolf	**196**	**58%**
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
PlayStation Move Heroes	**204**	**54%**
Poker Night 2	232	55%
Port Royale 3: Pirates & Merchants	**224**	**54%**
Portal 2	**205**	**95%**
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: Classic	**173**	**67%**
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	**200**	**88%**
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	**181**	**76%**
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puddle	**216**	**76%**
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puppeteer	**236**	**70%**
Pure	171	80%
Puzzle Chronicles	**194**	**70%**
Puzzle Dimensions	208	81%
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	**181**	**68%**
Quantum Conundrum	**221**	**90%**
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	**197**	**29%**
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Rachet & Clank: Q-Force	**227**	**52%**
Rag Doll Kung-Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rage	**211**	**60%**
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Rainbow Six Vegas	**155**	**88%**
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	**203**	**54%**
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	**211**	**68%**
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	**221**	**88%**
Rayman Legends	235	83%
Rayman Origins	**212**	**80%**
Red Dead Redemption	**193**	**92%**
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	**180**	**80%**
Remember Me	232	61%
Renegade Ops	**211**	**78%**
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	**211**	**72%**
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil: Revelations HD	**232**	**71%**
Resident Evil 4 HD	**210**	**93%**
Resident Evil 5	**177**	**86%**
Resident Evil 6	223	88%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	**151**	**83%**
Resistance 2	**173**	**90%**
Resistance 3	**210**	**88%**
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Retro City Rampage	**228**	**78%**
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	**217**	**67%**
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Rise Of The Argonauts	**176**	**58%**
Risen 2: Dark Waters	222	58%
Risen 3: Titan Lords	**248**	**25%**
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rock Band Blitz	**223**	**80%**
Rock Band	**169**	**94%**
Rock Band 2	**179**	**96%**
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rocksmith	**223**	**78%**
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	**209**	**49%**
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
RUSE	**197**	**82%**
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	**180**	**76%**
Sacred 3	247	60%
Saints Row 2	**172**	**79%**
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
Saints Row IV: Gat Out Of Hell	**253**	**65%**
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	**216**	**52%**
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep1	**194**	**90%**
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playground Ep2	**194**	**92%**
Savage Moon	**175**	**87%**
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	**198**	**36%**
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island SE	**195**	**92%**
Sega Rally Online Arcade	**208**	**74%**
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
Section 8: Prejudice	**209**	**80%**
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	**220**	**54%**
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	**158**	**92%**
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	**198**	**76%**
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shank	**197**	**86%**
Shatter	**183**	**91%**
Shaun White Skateboarding	**198**	**70%**
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	**177**	**32%**
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	**199**	**76%**
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
Silent Hill: Downpour	**217**	**81%**
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	**174**	**64%**
The Simpsons Arcade Game	216	54%

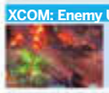
GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
The Simpsons Game	**160**	**82%**
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	**212**	**70%**
SingStar	159	80%
Singularity	**195**	**80%**
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skate	**159**	**86%**
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	**192**	**86%**
Skullgirls	218	88%
Sleeping Dogs	**222**	**80%**
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sly Cooper: Thieves In Time	**230**	**60%**
Sniper Elite V2	**218**	**52%**
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	**230**	**55%**
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic Adventure	**198**	**63%**
Sonic Adventure 2	225	69%
Sonic CD	**214**	**82%**
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 1	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode 2	**225**	**40%**
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	**227**	**88%**
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	**151**	**52%**
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	**219**	**76%**
SoulCalibur IV	**169**	**94%**
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
South Park: The Stick of Truth	**242**	**81%**
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	**155**	**33%**
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	**197**	**69%**
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Spin Jam	**174**	**32%**
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	**153**	**79%**
Split/Second: Velocity	**192**	**90%**
Sports Champions	**196**	**83%**
Sports Champions 2	225	65%
SSX	**216**	**45%**
Stacking	203	88%
Starhawk	**219**	**81%**
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Trek	**231**	**52%**
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	**171**	**65%**
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Star Wars: Pinball	**230**	**79%**
Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	**178**	**51%**
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	**209**	**92%**
Street Fighter IV	**176**	**95%**
Street Fighter X Tekken	**217**	**83%**
Strength Of The Sword 3	234	81%
Strider	**242**	**62%**
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	**151**	**83%**
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	**157**	**82%**
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	**190**	**55%**
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	**176**	**72%**
Super Street Fighter IV	**191**	**90%**
Supremacy MMA	**211**	**40%**
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	**199**	**88%**
Syndicate	216	78%
Tales Of Graces f	**222**	**77%**
Tales Of Monkey Island	**196**	**91%**
Tales Of Xillia	234	70%
Tales Of Xillia 2	**249**	**71%**
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tekken 6	**184**	**94%**
Tekken Tag Tournament 2	**223**	**90%**
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	**221**	**60%**
Tetris	202	84%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	**203**	**62%**
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
The Last Of Us	**233**	**94%**



When *The Last Of Us* is good (winter), it's better than anything else this gen – we do not say that lightly.

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
The Last Of Us: Left Behind	242	81%
The Testament Of Sherlock Holmes	**224**	**55%**
The Walking Dead	**231**	**92%**
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	231	20%
Thor: God Of Thunder	**206**	**38%**
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	231	61%
Time Crisis 4	**166**	**69%**
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	**162**	**72%**
TMNT: Turtles In Time-Re-shelled	186	57%
TNA Impact!	**171**	**71%**
Tokyo Jungle	223	81%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	**173**	**80%**
Tom Clancy's HAWX	177	75%
Tom Clancy's HAWX 2	**196**	**69%**
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist	235	71%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	**210**	**78%**
Tomb Raider	**229**	**90%**
Tomb Raider Trilogy	**204**	**86%**
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	**151**	**85%**
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD	223	73%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	**160**	**72%**
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	**218**	**45%**
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	**203**	**60%**
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	**208**	**64%**
Transformers: Fall Of Cybertron	223	73%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	**194**	**80%**
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trine	**184**	**85%**
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	**194**	**61%**
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Tumble	**198**	**70%**
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	**163**	**46%**
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	**203**	**64%**
UFC Undisputed 2009	**180**	**90%**
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	**215**	**82%**
Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Ultra Street Fighter IV	**246**	**85%**
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	**185**	**96%**
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	**212**	**90%**
Under Siege	**207**	**71%**
Unearthed: Trail Of Ibn Battuta: Ep1	233	05%
The Unfinished Swan	**225**	**78%**
Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	**151**	**54%**
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	**189**	**76%**
Vanquish	**197**	**93%**
Viking: Battle For Asgard	**165**	**74%**
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	**220**	**90%**
Virtua Tennis 3	**150**	**91%**
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wakeboarding HD	**195**	**65%**
The Walking Dead: All That Remains	240	89%
The Walking Dead: 400 Days	**234**	**83%**
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	**210**	**51%**
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	**202**	**14%**
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	**183**	**55%**
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	**184**	**41%**
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	**188**	**56%**
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	**207**	**49%**
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout HD	**172**	**84%**
Wizorb	222	78%
Wolfenstein	**183**	**72%**
Wonderbook: Book Of Spells	226	80%
Worms Collection	**224**	**85%**
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Ultimate Mayhem	**217**	**80%**
WRC 3 FIA World Rally Championship	225	75%
WWE All Stars	**204**	**82%**

GAME	ISSUE	SCORE
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE 13	225	55%
X-Blades	**178**	**54%**
XCOM: Enemy Unknown	**224**	**94%**



Thinking, planning, failing and dying is back in fashion: *XCOM* is a phenomenal reimagining of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right.

X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	**179**	**71%**
Yaiba: Ninja Gaiden Z	242	35%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	**216**	**60%**
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	**203**	**79%**
Zen Pinball 2	**224**	**90%**
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	**213**	**69%**
Zone Of The Enders HD Collection	226	81%
Zuma	**182**	**78%**

PS VITA LISTING



A-Men	217	70%
Army Corps Of Hell	**217**	**64%**
Assassin's Creed III: Liberation	225	76%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	**221**	**35%**
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	**216**	**85%**
Call Of Duty: Black Ops Declassified	227	18%
Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc	**242**	**85%**
Danganronpa 2: Goodbye Despair	249	89%
Dead Nation	**201**	**86%**
Destiny Of Spirits	244	76%
Dokuro	**230**	**71%**
Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable	230	82%
Escape Plan	**216**	**81%**
FIFA Football	216	80%
flOw	**151**	**90%**
Flower	176	85%
Gravity Crash	**187**	**85%**
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hotline Miami	**233**	**85%**
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Joe Danger	**194**	**96%**
Killzone: Mercenary	236	88%
LittleBigPlanet	**223**	**93%**
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	**216**	**85%**
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	**215**	**59%**
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	**217**	**81%**
Muramasa Rebirth	234	80%
New Little King's Story	**224**	**70%**
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	**230**	**60%**
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Orgarhythm	**230**	**55%**
PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale	225	80%
Persona 4 Golden	**228**	**94%**
PixelJunk Monsters	**163**	**94%**
Puddle	**222**	**82%**
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	**215**	**52%**
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	**216**	**48%**
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Silent Hill: Book Of Memories	**225**	**32%**
Sorcery Saga: Curse of the Great Curry God	240	70%
Soul Sacrifice	**232**	**85%**
Sound Shapes	223	88%
Superfrog HD	**234**	**41%**
Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz	224	78%
Sumioni: Demon Arts	**230**	**46%**
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Tearaway	**239**	**80%**
Terraria	232	85%
Touch My Katamari	**216**	**83%**
Toukiden: The Age Of Demons	241	86%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	**216**	**80%**
Uncharted: Fight For Fortune	227	83%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	**215**	**83%**
Unit 13	216	67%
Velocity Ultra	**233**	**80%**
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
Virtue's Last Reward	**227**	**84%**
WipEout 2048	215	87%

**denotes import review*

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

Watch out! Games!



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Bloodborne

WHY (was it chosen?)

Time to start again, I guess

LUKE ALBIGÉS

WHEN I WAS rudely pulled straight into New Game+ after finishing *Bloodborne* solo and blind for the first time, I'll admit that I made a bit of a scene. I was taken against my will, before I could go back and finish up a bunch of optional bosses, and before I could put the finishing touches to my arsenal. Still, I'm ploughing through NG+ now, though I'm going to take my time – meeting some of the hidden bosses here for the first time has been a challenge already and after my solid week of stress and despair in Yharnam, I'm happy to take it slow this time around...



WHAT (have they been playing?)

Hotline Miami 2

WHY (was it chosen?)

Chasing that Platinum

PAUL WALKER-EMIG

I ABSOLUTELY LOVED *Hotline Miami* so much that it's the only game I've ever bothered to actively chase the Platinum for, just so it would give me more to do in one of my favourite games of all time. It looks like doing the same with *Hotline Miami 2* could be even harder, so I'm not sure whether I'll stick it out to the end. For now, though, I'm quite happy at the prospect of having hours and hours of *Hotline Miami 2* ahead of me as I check those trophies off the list. A+ing every level and finishing on Hard isn't going to be easy, but I'll give it a go.

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THAT'S NO MOON

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

DICE finds the future of the FPS in a galaxy far, far away

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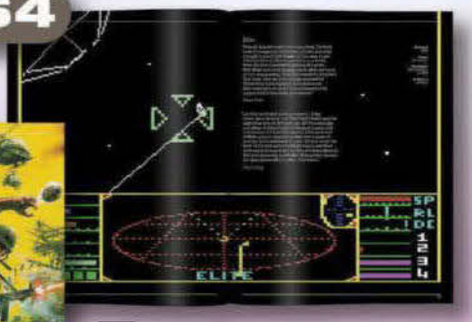
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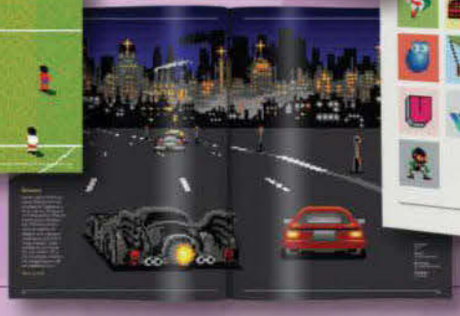
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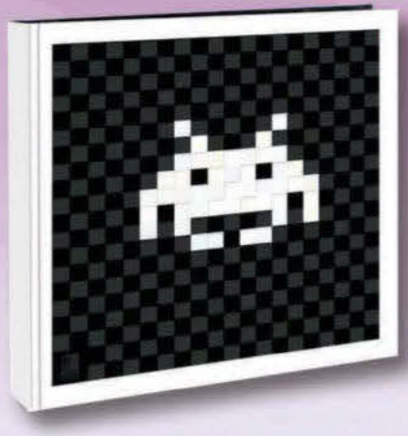


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